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THE

# WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

# WILLIAM WARBURTON, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

A NEW EDITION,

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

*A DISCOURSE BY WAY OF GENERAL PREFACE;*

CONTAINING

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE, WRITINGS, AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR;

*BY RICHARD HURD, D.D.*

LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

VOLUME THE NINTH.

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THE

# PRINCIPLES

OF

# NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION

OCCASIONALLY OPENED AND EXPLAINED;

IN

## A COURSE OF SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF

LINCOLN'S-INN.

TO

THE WORSHIPFUL

THE MASTERS OF THE BENCH

OF

THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF

*LINCOLN'S-INN.*

THE following DISCOURSES were preached, and are now published, with a view of vindicating Religion from the insults of Libertines, and the indiscretions of Enthusiasts. Nor will so fair a purpose be at all sullied by the motive I had for this address: which was, only to acknowledge, in the most grateful manner I was able, my obligations to the Bench for the honour done me, at the last vacancy, in the generous offer of the Preachership

Preachership of the Society; as well as for Your constant civilities to me ever since I was honoured with the charge. These Discourses, therefore, such as they are, are humbly offered to You, by,

GENTLEMEN,

*Your most obliged and faithful Servant,*

Lincoln's-Inn,
Nov. 23, 1752.

W. WARBURTON.

# SERMON I.

## THE NATURE AND CONDITION OF TRUTH.

JOHN xviii. ver. 38.

PILATE SAITH UNTO HIM, WHAT IS TRUTH?—AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE WENT OUT AGAIN.

THE blessed Jesus was had before Pilate as a criminal of State: and the Governor began to question him upon that footing. But when he found the kingdom, which this supposed Criminal was accused of claiming, was one merely spiritual, or, in Pilate's conception, a kingdom only in idea; he considered Jesus as no proper subject of his animadversion. And so far he acted as became his public character.

But his incuriosity or indifference, when TRUTH was offered to be laid before him as a private man, and by one who, he knew, had the repute of exercising every spiritual power necessary to inforce it, shews him in a light much less excusable. The negligent air of his insulting question will hardly admit of an

dition. But Such can hear talk of the TRUTHS of God unmoved and unimproved, who tremble at his judgments, and anticipate the terrors of his vengeance.

But if the ill usage of Truth by the Philosophers could so disgust the Politician of old, as to make him indifferent to an acquaintance of this importance; What, must we think, will be her treatment amongst modern Statesmen, whose views are neither more pure nor more generous; and whose penetration, perhaps, does not go much beyond the busy men of antiquity; when they see her so freely handled by those amongst us, who call themselves her Ministers, and profess to consecrate her to the service of Religion? Amongst such, I mean amongst the active, no less than amongst the idle part of the fashionable world, Pilate's question is become proverbial, when they would insinuate that TRUTH, like VIRTUE, is nothing but a NAME.

" What is this TRUTH, say they, of which the world has heard so much talk, and hath received so little information? You boast of it, as the Guide of life, yet still its residence remains unknown. Which would tempt one to suspect, that either there is no such thing; a thing essentially different from falsehood; or that its nature is too fine and subtile for the grosser intellect of man to comprehend. But above all, what is that GOSPEL TRUTH, which its Ministers, in their very attempts to recommend, are wont so much to discredit and abuse? We do not mean that dim Specter or Phantasm of it, which hath so long haunted and possessed the Schools: but, that which you call, its brightest

Substance,

Substance, as it sits inthroned in the hearts of the Faithful. How miserably is this shaken, not only by the dissentions of its Friends, but by every the slightest effort of its Enemies! And while objections to Religion lie plain and level to the capacities of the vulgar; the solution of them requires the utmost stretch of parts and learning to excogitate; and equal application and attention to comprehend. From all this (say they) we are naturally led to conclude, That the Gospel-doctrines are no truths; or at least truths of no general concern; since they are neither uniformly held by those who are employed to teach them; nor subject to the examination of such as are enjoined to receive them."

Something like this, I apprehend, may be the private sentiment of those who have more decently discarded all care and concern about the things of religion.

And as it cannot be denied but that men's acquired passions and appetites have concurred with the constitutional weakness of human nature to form these conclusions against Truth; and especially that best part of truth, Religion; Charity seems to call upon us to detect and lay open the general causes which have given birth to men's prejudices against both.

I. And first, with regard to Truth in the abstract; the various hindrances to its discovery; and men's backwardness to acquiesce in it, when found.

The principal and surest step towards the possession of the Good we seek, is our love and affection

for the object. This quickens our industry, and sharpens our attention. So that the LOVE OF TRUTH hath been always recommended by the Masters of wisdom as the best means of succeeding in the pursuit of it. There is hardly any one who suspects he wants this LOVE: and yet, How few are there whom their confidence does not deceive! We mistake the love of our Opinions for the love of Truth, because we suppose our own opinions true: and yet, for the most part, they have been received upon credit; and consequently are much more likely to be false. Hence, this imaginary love of Truth proves, in fact, little better than the love of Error: and the affections, being now misplaced, they are a greater impediment to us in the pursuit of Truth than if we had no affections at all concerning it.

How then shall we know when we have this love? for still it is necessary we should have it, if we would follow Truth to any good purpose. It is difficult to describe what every man must feel for himself; and yet as dangerous to trust only to our feelings, when the object is so easily mistaken. However, When we set out in search of Truth as of a stranger, and not in search of arguments to support our familiar opinions; when we possess ourselves in a perfect indifference for every thing but known and attested Truth; totally regardless of the place from whence it comes, or of that to which it seems to tend; when the mind, I say, is in this situation, no one, I think, can fairly dispute the reality of its attachment.

1. But

1. But our appetites rarely suffer us to observe this strict and rigid conduct. We seek the gratification of our humour even in the laws which should correct it. Hence so many various SYSTEMS OF MORALITY, to suit every man's proper frame of mind, and bent of constitution. The indolent, the active, the sanguine, the flegmatic, and saturnine, have all their correspondent Theories. Now, inquirers of this turn must needs be admirably qualified for the discovery of Truth! While just as one or other of the complexions carries him, the man is drawn by a strong, though hidden impulse, into the very centre of his congenial system. And what will be the issue? His concern, from henceforth, is not the trial, but the support of his opinions; which can be no otherwise provided for than by keeping the arguments in favour of them always in view, and by striving to forget whatever seems to have a less indulgent aspect.

2. Prejudices mislead the inquirer no less than his passions. He venerates the Notions he received from his forefathers: He rests in them, upon the authority of such whose judgment he esteems; or, at least, wishes them well, for the sake of the honours and profits he sees attached to the profession of them. Nay, he can persuade himself to patronize what he has once chosen, for reasons still more remote from the conclusions of common sense. He likes them because they are old; because they are new; for being plain and simple; for being sublime and mysterious; for

being followed by the Few; for being followed by the Many; in a word, on a thousand other accounts, with which Truth hath no manner of concern. But this must never be forgotten, that, let Prejudice drive from what quarter it will, it is sure to make shipwreck of the Understanding, thus flattered and betrayed.

But then bad as this is, Since this too is certainly the case, that the impediments in the pursuit of Truth are not essential but accidental; we may well account for our mistakes in setting out, the slowness of our advance, and the rubs and oppositions in our passage, without having recourse to any sceptical conclusions in favour of the incomprehensible nature of Truth, or the inacessible situation in which the eternal Author of all things hath placed her. For is this any reason, that because some Truths are so deep, that our haste and impatience will not suffer us to sound them; others so disguised, that our dissipation will not allow us the attention necessary to discover them; and others again so suspected, that our prejudices dispose us to reject them; that because some errors are represented so plausibly as to look like Truth; others seem so commodious as to be wished Truth; and others again appear so fashionable as to usurp all the prerogatives due unto it; Is this, I say, any reason for sober men to conclude, that either there is no difference between what We call Truth and Falsehood; or that the difference is so insensible that it will not serve us for a distinction? Our very Senses, in many

many cases, our Reason in more, and our Hearts in almost all, will convince us of the contrary.

II. We come next to consider the objections to RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

1. And first, with regard to the Ministers of Religion, their passions and their prejudices. It is rather to be lamented than objected to us, that consecration to the service of heaven will not exempt good men from the frailties of humanity. As to the bad, indeed, if it does not aggravate their crimes, at least it renders them more scandalous: and, in general, when the matter is of high concernment, the passions both of good and bad are always, from the common impotence of our nature, proportionably inflamed. Mistaken constancy, or irregular zeal, makes this man tenacious of received opinions: and the obliquer affections of avarice or ambition make that man reverence such as are established. Opposition, likewise, will make both but too much disposed to obtrude what they suspect to be false; and to secrete what they know to be true. This draws them still further from the road of Truth, while all they seek is to be at distance from one another's Parties and Opinions. So long, therefore, as these interests prevail, the plainest Truths will be disputed, and the most notorious Errors patronized and supported; the obscurest Principles preferred to the clearest, and the subtilest conclusions take place of the most simple.

2. Inveterate

2. Inveterate errors concerning the nature and end of God's WRITTEN WORD, errors long since sanctified by time and authority, are another source of those disgraces to which Revelation is become subject. The Gospel is so commonly honoured with the name of TRUTH; and holy Scripture in general so frequently recommended for its capacity of *leading us into all truth*, that men have been apt to regard it as a treasury of Science; and to apply to their Bible for all the principles of human knowledge. And under this delusion, the vain inquirer, to cover the dishonour of a fruitless search, hath always had recourse to that exhaustless fund, the human Imagination; which is ever then most extravagant when Reason is at greatest distance. How miserably, for instance, hath the Mosaic account of the Creation been dishonoured by the wild and jarring expositions of men devoted to this or that sect of PHILOSOPHY or MYSTICISM! Platonists, Materialists, Cartesians, Chemists, Cabalists, and all the impure fry of physical, philological, and spiritual Enthusiasts, have found their peculiar whimsies supported, and made authentic, in the first and second chapters of the book of GENESIS!

How, again, have the Jewish LAW and the GOSPEL of Jesus been abused by Slaves and Rebels; or by such as were ready to become either; to find, in one, the DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS; and, in the other, the Supremacy and DOMINION OF THE CHURCH!

But amidst all the folly and mischief attending this perversion of the Bible, in support of human

systems of Philosophy and Politics, had men only reflected, that, though Scripture be said to be *written to make us wise*, it is added—*unto salvation**; they would have sought for the principles of natural and civil knowledge amongst their proper Professors: and have studied Scripture only to investigate that *wisdom which is from above*; and *is first* PURE, *then* PEACEABLE †: a wisdom, which, at the same time that it enlightens the Judgment, rectifies the Heart; and so takes away all ground of contention both from a perplexed head and a bigotted temper.

III. But the thing which, most of all other, indisposes sceptical men to the truths of Revelation is, "That the small remain of SCRIPTURE-TRUTH which the friends and ministers of Religion have left unimpaired, lies a prey to its enemies: obvious (they say) to a thousand objections; and every objection level to the capacity of the Vulgar: while the solution of them not only requires the best abilities to frame and draw out, but the closest attention likewise to comprehend."

Now, as this is supposed to affect both the nature of Truth in general, and the character of the Gospel in particular, we shall consider it in either light.

1. All objections to Truth must needs be founded in false judgment: False judgment proceeds from ignorance, or a superficial view of things: But this ignorance is the proper allotment of the Vulgar; So

* 2 Tim. chap. iii. 15. † Jam. chap. iii. 17.

that,

that, what arises from thence, as referring to, and consonant with their capacities, cannot but make a quick and easy impression. On the contrary, the solution of these difficulties must needs be formed on a true judgment of things. This judgment springs from a profound view of Nature. But such a view requires a large detail: and the mutual connexions and dependencies of things, a strict examination: hence the necessity of time to acquire, and of attention to comprehend. These different properties in OBJECTIONS and SOLUTIONS are so constant and notorious, that the ease of questioning foolishly, and the difficulty of answering wisely, is become proverbial.

Hence we collect, that even admitting Revelation to be true, it would be necessarily attended with the disadvantages here objected to it.

2. In vindication of the character of the GOSPEL it may be replied, That it is one thing to understand the meaning of a truth delivered in a proposition, and another, to comprehend all the reasons on which that truth is founded. The first of these is all that is NECESSARY for man to know: For when God vouchsafed the revelation of himself to the world, he annexed SAVING FAITH to the knowledge and acceptance of clear and simple propositions, such as these, that *Jesus is the Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind.* They mistake his Gospel, and alter the terms of his Covenant, who put salvation upon the evidence to be given of the NECESSITY OF A SAVIOUR. The learned Divine, we

we presume, is able to satisfy all serious inquirers, in both these particulars: But if the reasoning which proves the latter, exceed the capacity of the mere Vulgar, it derogates nothing from Revelation; since the knowledge of that matter makes no part of the terms of our salvation. All, that man can wish should be indulged him, in consideration of his natural infirmities, is indulged him: For the utmost he could desire is, that the Truths, which come proposed to him from God, be plain and consistent; and accompanied with Credentials from the sender. Agreeably hereto, the fundamental doctrines, which the Christian religion objects to our belief, are the existence of one God, the Creator; and his moral government of the world; that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, sent by his Father to redeem mankind from sin and misery, and to restore them to eternal life, by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross; and that the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier and enlightener of all those who *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.* Propositions of the utmost clearness and precision. Nor is the evidence of their original less simple or intelligible; such as the Miracles performed, and the Prophesies fulfilled, in attestation of them.

So admirably fitted for the gross body of mankind, is this Religion, both in its genius and promulgation! No absurd incredibility in Nature, proposed; no blind submission to Authority, required. The doctrines, as clear as they are pure, equally solicit the Understanding and Affections; and are adapted to satisfy the Reason, at the same time

that

that they allure the Will. In a word, inforced with that power and conviction as makes it difficult for an ingenuous mind to reject them, though under cover of that civil (but criminal) dismission of the Roman Governor.

IV. But then, "If these fundamental articles of the Gospel-covenant were contrived by divine Wisdom, with such simplicity and plainness, How came they, it will be asked, to be so delivered as to afford occasion for the inquisitive to start a thousand curious questions, which have no other tendency than to perplex and obscure them?" To this, we beg leave to say, that, though, indeed, sacred Scripture, as far as it respects the essentials of the Christian faith, be exceeding clear and simple, yet it does, at the same time, contain many profound, and even impenetrable mysteries. Mysteries, however, which no less manifest the adorable wisdom, than the open doctrines do the abounding goodness of our all-gracious Master.

The Gospel is a Covenant or Transaction of God with Man. The immense distance between the Parties contracting must needs make the several parts of the covenant very dissimilar. So that, if from Man's nature and situation we may expect, that, when God vouchsafes to direct us by a revelation of his WILL, all his commands will be brief, evident, and full; we must, on the like reasoning, conclude from the nature of the other contracting Party, the God of the universe, that when he vouchsafes to instruct Man in the revelation of his TRUTH, there

there will be some things in the *Covenant of Grace*, which will partake of the sublime obscurity of its Author.

It was the same God who framed the Christian Œconomy and the Newtonian System. Why therefore should it be matter of objection to the former, and not to the other, that there are many things surpassing human comprehension in both? Is the doctrine of Grace more stupendous than the velocity of Motion given to Light? Or is the incarnation of the Son of God more astonishing than the least possible quantity of Matter sufficient to make a World? If therefore the Newtonian philosophy (which is built on Science) hath revealed and demonstrated the powers of Nature amidst all that darkness; how can we doubt of seeing God in his Gospel, though surrounded with the impenetrable depths of infinity? In a word, I think we might as reasonably conclude against the divine original of the Gospel, if there were no traces of such mysterious parts, as if there were only such. An unclouded splendor, and undiluted obscurity, equally discrediting the Works and Dispensations of Heaven.

But, of the dark parts of Revelation there are two sorts: one, which may be cleared up by the studious application of well-improved talents; the other, which will always reside within the shadow of God's throne, where it would be impiety to intrude.

However, neither the one nor other make part of the essential doctrines of our Faith. The impenetrable nature of the latter totally unfits them for objects of religious belief; and the difficult comprehension

hension of the former unfits them for becoming objects of the People's. But as it is this sort only which can afford any reasonable ground to the objection before us, we shall be a little more particular.

The Gospel professes itself to be the completion of one entire System, advancing by a gradual progress, through various Ages and People, from the Creation of man to his Redemption. A Dispensation of this character cannot but be contrived and conducted on principles of the sublimest wisdom. So that as, on the one hand, the knowledge of the relations of the parts to one another; and their various coincidencies, and mutual operations, to produce, either their distinct, or their united effects, will be extremely difficult; so, on the other, the attainment of this knowledge will be necessary, if we aspire to that full and comprehensive idea of Religion, which can alone enable us to detect and satisfy the doubts and cavils of Infidelity.

Now, in this consists the ratio and essential grounds of the Gospel-doctrine; of which, one would think, the only issue should be credit, and glory to the Christian Faith. But unadvised inquirers exploring the depths of infinite Wisdom without modesty and reverence, have given a handle to licentious men to turn these proofs, explored improperly, and imprudently inforced, into an argument against the divine original of Revelation. And this pretence making its appeal to the ignorance of the Vulgar, is greedily embraced. In the meantime, the solution of the cavil demanding an enlarged

view

view of God's moral economy, acquired by the right application of general knowledge, well digested, we need not wonder, that a better understanding than commonly falls to the share of the People is required to enable us to see the force of such reasoning.

But is this general incapacity any real objection to the truth of our Religion? By no means. It is perfectly agreeable to our ideas of God's moral attributes, that he should inform men of his Will; that he should deliver to them a rule of action, accompanied with the sanctions of a Law: It is as conformable to our ideas of Man's relation to his Maker, that he should receive and observe this Law. Reason, indeed, expects that the delivery of it be attended with these conditions, That the propositions in which it is contained be clear and intelligible; the truths in which it is conveyed, agreeable to the nature of things; and the pretensions of those intrusted with its propagation, confirmed by superior power. Along with this Law is proclaimed the free gift of a general blessing; which the Giver might bestow at his pleasure, as well in one reasonable way as in another.

Has man any more to expect before he vouchsafes to accept this free blessing, or condescends to be governed by this equitable Law? Reason says, No. But Passion and Prejudice stand out. "We want, they cry, to be informed how we came to stand in need of this Salvation. We want to be instructed in the ratio or essential grounds of the doctrine propounded."

Now if divine Wisdom had not thought fit to comply with so bold and insolent a demand, Could we accuse him of being wanting to his favourite Man? Surely we could not. Yet God hath been graciously pleased to humour our caprice. He hath laid open the *depth and riches* of his System so fully, as to enable those, who are duly qualified with human knowledge, to satisfy these demands, and to explain the WHY of his economy of Redemption.

Will this content us? By no means. "The solu-" tion, it is said, is founded in such principles of " speculative science as the People can never com-" prehend." But for this, there is no remedy. The fault, if there be any, lies not in the mode of the religious Dispensation, but in the nature of Truth itself: Which requires much attention of the best gifted and best improved understanding to penetrate to its general principles. Would you have the eternal nature of things altered to gratify your prejudices? Truth, no more than its Author, can sink to the level of your ignorance; but You, by a proper cultivation of your reason, may rise to Truth, may reach its sublimest heights, its residence near the footstool of the Almighty.

" This attempt, you say, the station and condition of the people will never suffer them to make; they have neither leisure to learn, nor opportunities to philosophise."—Be content then with those simple principles, and plain arguments for Religion, explained above: and have the candour and honesty to own, that, if you want knowledge to judge of the answers of the learned, to

infidel

infidel objections; you want it equally to judge of the objections themselves; which, therefore, should never indispose you to what you do understand; Principles, which constitute those essential articles of faith by which you must be saved. And if the higher and more intricate truths of Religion exceed your capacity, be assured (if for no other reason than this) that you may be safely ignorant of them. In the concerns of life, about which, men are generally more in earnest than in the affairs of Religion, you take the conclusions of Science upon trust, and erect them into principles: You navigate, you build, you state accounts, and trust to the mathematician for the ratio of those rules by which you work and attain your purpose.

But to this you will say, "It is true, indeed, that in the common affairs of life, men go on upon trust; but then uniform experience shews, they are in no danger of being deceived; for the constant success attending the operations, thus conducted, assures them, that the rules by which they act are deduced from principles of Truth."—And is that FAITH and OBEDIENCE, which constitute us the disciples of Christ, less uniformly productive of good? Did Faith ever violate civil peace; or Obedience impair domestic felicity? In vain you tell us of that frantic Zeal, of that dire Superstition, which have set whole Kingdoms in a flame, and desolated private Houses. The first mischief they always do is to corrupt FAITH and OBEDIENCE: and after this, to charge upon these, the evils caused by their destroyers, is adding mockery to injustice.

And here let me observe, that the Founders of our holy Faith were in this, as in all other parts of their conduct, truly admirable. What they chiefly insisted on to the People at large, was the BELIEF of a few simple propositions, as necessary to Salvation. When they addressed themselves to such Particulars who were fitly qualified and rightly disposed, such who have heads to distinguish, and hearts to chuse the right, they as warmly recommend EXAMINATION, *to search the Scriptures*, and *to try all things*. Yet the only use a late writer could find in so sage and generous a conduct was to turn it to abuse, in a piece of profane drollery, called *Christianity not founded on argument*. An egregious exploit! and worthy the Author's charitable views; the mock consolation of Fanatics, and the sly merriment of Sceptics and Unbelievers.

But now, we are stopt short and told, that all our pains might have been well spared; for that the necessity of these profound defences, so much embroiling the learned and embarrassing the Vulgar, doth not arise from the nature of truth, but from the folly or knavery of its Advocates. "It is astonish-
" ing (says the Objector) how Divines could take
" so much silly pains to establish mystery on me-
" taphysics, revelation on philosophy, and matters
" of fact on abstract reasoning. A Religion founded
" on the authority of a divine Mission, confirmed
" by prophecies and miracles, appeals to fact: and
" the facts must be proved as all other facts,
" that pass for authentic, are proved. If they are
" thus proved, the Religion will prevail without
" the

" the assistance of so much profound reasoning *." To which I reply, That, had this charge on the Divines been well founded, the objection would yet have been uncandid and disingenuous. For who were they that drew the Divines into metaphysics, philosophy, and abstract reasoning, but these Objectors themselves? And on what occasion, but this?—The advocates of Revelation did not want to be told that a " Religion founded on the authority " of a divine Mission, and confirmed by prophecies " and miracles, appeals to facts," and was to be proved by human evidence: For in reality, by FACTS they had already proved it: And with such force and Evidence, that unbelievers were driven from their Objections to the Facts, and reduced to take refuge in Philosophy—" You press us with facts (say they) and the testimony of antiquity: supports too slender to bear the unnatural load of REVELATION! A thing impossible in itself, as it opposes the established order of Providence: A thing impossible under the Bible representation of it, as several passages in that book directly oppose our common notions of God's Attributes."—In this strait, what was to be done, but either to confess the force of the objection; or, by the aid of that *metaphysics*, *philosophy*, and *abstract reasoning*, which the last objection appeals to, and which the other condemns, to shew its futility and weakness. For the constitution of nature cannot be explained without metaphysics; and the Attributes of God

* L. B's Letters concerning the study and use of History.

cannot be confronted with his supposed commands, without the use of abstract reasoning. And yet, for submitting to this necessity, for undergoing this drudgery, the Divines are upbraided, ridiculed, and turned into contempt. And by whom? By the very men who occasioned the distress, and defied them to get out of it.

Nor is this the worst. The Divines are represented as applying their "metaphysics, philosophy, "and profound reasoning, to prophecies and mira-"cles." How gross the misrepresentation! They had more wit, they had more honesty (I speak not here, nor does the Objector, of two or three crack-brained visionaries), than to take so much *silly pains*. They applied this reasoning as became them; not to matter of FACT, but of RIGHT. It was pretended, that God could not give a Revelation; that he could not select a chosen People; that he could not accept a vicarious atonement. And against these bold assertions, the Christian Divine directed all the force and evidence of true Philosophy.—With what success, the latest posterity shall tell with gratitude.

V. But it is not only from what lies hid, but from what hath been discovered, that the enemies of our Faith can raise objections to its discredit. If, in these later times, it hath been pretended, that a more rational idea of God's dispensations hath been proposed; if the various genius, the comparative excellence, the mutual dependence, the reciprocal illustrations of the several Parts, and the gradual progress of the Whole towards perfection,

tion, have been investigated with a penetration, solidity, and precision unknown to those ages which time alone hath taught us to esteem venerable; if, I say, this hath been pretended; We are then asked, "How it came to pass, that Truths, so sublime and useful, should have lain hid till now; When the light of the Spirit was sent so early, and had illuminated the Church so long? How it came to pass, they were denied to the best times; and, after a long course of ages, reserved as a reward for the very worst?"—And when they have asked this, to discredit OLD truths; they can, in order to increase the prejudices against them, join with bigots, how inconsistently soever, to decry the NEW.

To this objection, it is sufficient to reply, That the promise and gift of the SPIRIT may be considered either as it concerned the first propagators of the Word; or as it concerned the teachers and hearers of it ever since. As to the immediate disciples of Christ, there is no doubt of their being abundantly enlightened for the work of their ministry; whether it was in making converts, in founding churches, or in composing those occasional instructions, by which Christians of all ages may improve the current benefits they receive from the assistance of the same Spirit.—And that assistance is the second point we are to consider.

Now the endowment of Grace is, in this respect, just the same with every common endowment of Nature; of little advantage without our co-operation! God hath given men hands and feet, to

procure good and to avert evil. But the benefit does not operate like a charm; it is to our dextrous application of the members that we owe all the advantages arising from their use. So it is in the free-gift of the Spirit: it was bestowed upon us to enlighten the Understanding, to assist the Judgment, and to redress the disorders of the Will. But if either we refuse to exert these faculties, or will direct them to improper objects, the use and efficacy of Grace must surely be defeated. These reflections will enable us to give a reasonable account how it might happen, that very important truths, concerning God's moral Dispensations, may have remained hid for ages, and yet be reserved (to the greater glory of his Gospel in its greatest need), for the discovery of these worse and latter times.

This supposed ordonance, in the œconomy of Grace, may receive credit from what is confessed to have happened in the economy of Nature.

The power, wisdom, and goodness of the Author of the System to which we belong, is so clear and evident from every obvious configuration of Matter surrounding us, that it cannot escape the notice of the most inattentive, or lie concealed from the most ignorant. Hence a GOD, the Maker, Preserver, and Governor of the world, is the concurrent voice of Nature.

Now CREATION and GOVERNMENT, from which the morality of human actions is deduced, are the great principles of NATURAL RELIGION. So that God could not be said to have been wanting in the discovery of himself to the lowest of his reasonable

creatures. Yet though the obvious marks of his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, thus obtrude themselves upon all men; it is certain that a well-directed study, in the contemplation of the great book of Nature, opens to us such stupendous wonders of his Power, such awful scenes of his Wisdom, and such inchanting prospects of his Goodness, as exceed all conception of the unlettered and uninstructed Spectator. Some faint taste of these beauties, the more Inquisitive enjoyed very early: But their successors, by too much indulging to SPECULATION, and allowing too little to EXPERIENCE, instead of finding a real, invented an infinite variety of ideal Worlds; all as dishonourable to the Author of Nature as distant from his Truth. At length, men grew wiser by the follies of those who went before them; and a different method of studying Nature was invented and pursued; in which Fancy was excluded, and Fact only allowed for a solid ground of physical progression. From this time, Science advanced; the veil of Nature was drawn aside; and her sacred Mysteries exposed to the open admiration of all men.

This was the case in the System of Nature. The System of Grace seems to run exactly parallel.

The great principles of Revealed Religion are FAITH and OBEDIENCE: And these are clearly and fully taught in the Gospel; and are alone sufficient to *make men wise unto salvation.* But we should greatly derogate from God's Moral government, not to suppose it abounding with the like mysterious wonders as the Natural. And to the study

study of these, there were more calls, and much better opportunities. The knowledge of God's moral Dispensation is the duty of every man; and more especially of the Ministers of Religion: So that partly on account of the importance of the subject; partly to enable us to oppose ourselves to the malice and sophistry of the enemy; but principally in obedience to the command, to *study the Scriptures*; it has, from the first ages of Christianity down to these times, been one of the principal occupations of the Learned. Yet what through unfavourable circumstances in the Civil and Literary world; what through the bias of inveterate prejudices; but, above all, from the oblique interests and turbulent passions of the inquirers themselves; the various systems of Religion, invented by Divines, and which all pretend to find in Scripture, have dishonoured the Redemption of mankind near as much as those of the Philosophers had dishonoured the Creation of the universe: till here, as in the other case, the same spirit of prudence and sobriety, which taught men the true method of treating the things of Nature, by a careful study of the volume of creation, led them into the right way of treating the things of God, by a careful study of the volume of Redemption. So that if, in these times, the advances in the knowledge of God's WILL should haply prove as considerable as those in the discovery of his WORKS, it will not be beside a reasonable expectation; as similar means are always likely to produce similar effects.

We have placed these correspondent histories of the

the progress of the human mind, in NATURE and GRACE, thus near one another, that, by comparing the parts of them together in the same view, we may see whether there be any objections to the truth of new discoveries in religious matters that do not equally hold against the truth of new discoveries in natural; of which, for their newness alone, no man ever yet entertained the least suspicion.

First, then, as to God's primary discovery of his Nature in the great book of Creation, compared to the discovery of his Will in the volume of his written word, we may observe his goodness in either case to be equally conspicuous. In the former, a man need but open his eyes to see the Divinity in every object; in the latter, he who *runs may read* the means and method of his own Salvation: In neither, is any thing wanting, that is necessary, to instruct the most ignorant in their dependance, and their duty. For further information in the works and ways of Providence, God wisely reserved it for the reward of the manly and virtuous improvement of the Understanding.

It is true, in fact, that throughout a vast series of ages, neither of these Inquirers made any very considerable advances in real knowledge: but it is as true, that the impediments, in both cases, proceeded not from any difficulties in the nature of the things inquired after, but from the wrong methods employed in the search. Instead of endeavouring to find out the real constitution of things

from

from the frame of God's works, as they are objected to our senses; or the nature of Revelation from the study of the word, as conveyed to us in Scripture; they invented imaginary Systems out of their own slender stock of Nothing; and then, by wresting and distorting, forced Nature and the Bible to father this shadowy and spurious issue.

But both Divines and Philosophers, when they became convinced of their follies, and, in consequence of that conviction, proceeded with more modesty, as well as better sense, to renounce their fanciful Hypotheses, and to erect Theories on the real constitution of things, Both, I say, made great advances in natural and religious truth.

These two important studies, therefore, being alike circumstanced, and having run the same fortune, demand, in all reason, the same judgment to be passed on their pretences.

But, alas! we are not accustomed to be thus equitable. One of the principal sources of human errors is the drawing different conclusions from the same principles.

It is confessed, that the book of Nature is so plain and clear, that every sentence names and reveals its Author: that if less obvious Truths have lain a long time concealed, it was men's own fault, in adhering to a perverse method of inquiry; and that when afterwards a better was invented, and they began to apply it with more care and sobriety, knowledge opened and enlarged itself proportionably: while the sudden blaze of light which followed, was so far from making Truth suspected, that it dissipated

dissipated all those doubts which had before been held of its obscure and equivocal nature.

But now if we turn from Physical to Religious inquiries, we shall find, that the very contrary inference hath been drawn from all the same circumstances. Because men had been long unsuccessful in the discovery of the higher truths of Religion, not only these, so lately found and so difficultly comprehended, but even the most obvious principles, early delivered and generally received, have been rendered doubtful and suspected.

But there is another sort of Men, the pretended friends indeed of Religion, who, from too great reverence for things established, have joined with such as have too little, in decrying all NOVELTIES in religious matters.

These Men, abhorring the vanity to be thought wiser than their forefathers, have in express terms declared their displeasure at *making* what they call *experiments in Religion.*

Divines, it is true, have long disputed how *experiments in Religion* should be made. Some would employ Scripture alone; others were for taking in Fathers and Councils; and a third sort for applying raillery and ridicule to the process. But, till of late, every man was for some *experiment* or other. For what is *making experiments* but (as we have just shewn) illustrating Revelation by new arguments arising from new discoveries made in the order, fitness, and harmony of the various dispensations of Religion amongst themselves, just as Philosophers (of whom the word is borrowed) unfold

unfold nature by new discoveries made, from repeated trials, in the contents of bodies.

*No experiments in Religion* is indeed the Language of Statesmen (for in some things bigotry and politics agree, as extremes run easily into one another by their very attempts to keep at distance), because, according to the Politician's Creed, Religion being useful to the state, and yet only a well-invented fiction, all *experiments*, that is, all inquiries into its truth, naturally tend, not to confirm, but to unsettle this necessary support of civil Government.

But, for one who believes Religion to come from God to be frighted with the danger of *experiments*, is to take his friend for his enemy, the most ridiculous of all panic terrors.

One might reasonably ask such a one, how it comes to pass that *experiments*, of so sovereign use in the knowledge of Nature, should be calculated to make such havoc in Religion? Are not both the works of God? Were not both given for Man's contemplation? Have not both, as proceeding from the common Master of the Universe, their depths and obscurities? And doth not the unfolding the mysteries of moral government tend equally, with the displaying the secrets of the natural, to the advancement of God's glory, and the happiness of Man? In a word, had no experiments been made in Nature, we had still slept in the shade, or wandered in the labyrinth of School Philosophy; and, had *no experiments been made in Religion*, we had still kept blundering on in the rugged and dark paths of School-divinity.

To

To end as we began, with the instruction afforded by my text. What reason seems to require of us is this; That if yet we know not THE TRUTH, we should seek it of those who do: and if the plain and simple principles of it will not serve our turn, but that we will needs philosophize, and demand a reason for every thing, that at least we stay for an Answer; and stay, too, till we understand it, before we venture to pronounce the Religion of our country to be nothing but a mere human imposition.

# SERMON II.

## GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT.

PSALM. cxliv. ver. 3.

LORD, WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU TAKEST KNOWLEDGE OF HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT THOU MAKEST ACCOUNT OF HIM?

THUS the holy Prophet, seized with a sacred horror at an UNIVERSE stretched out through the immensity of boundless Space; and with a rapturous gratitude for that GOODNESS who has graced his favourite Man with so tender and so intimate a regard.

Meditations of this kind are, indeed, most obvious and affecting. The RELIGIONIST and the MAN OF THE WORLD have equally employed them to reduce Humanity to its just value; though for very different purposes; the first, to excite religious gratitude in others; the second, to encourage himself in an impious NATURALISM.

When the Religionist compares this small Spot of earth to the whole of its System; and sees a number of primary and secondary planets, habita-

tions like his own, if he may judge by probable analogy, rolling round with it, and performing their various revolutions about one central fire, the common source of light and warmth to all, He is abashed at the mean and diminished rank his own world bears in this solemn and august assembly.

When, by the aid of improved Astronomy, he compares this subastral economy with the systems of the fixed stars; every one of which reigns a Sun, directing and influencing the revolutions of its attendant planets; and sees that, as the Earth is but a point compared to the orb of Saturn, so the orb of Saturn itself grows dimensionless when compared to that vast extent of space which the stellar-solar Systems possess and occupy; This Lord of the creation shrinks suddenly from his height, and mingles with the lowest crowd of unheeded and undistinguished Beings.

But when, by the further aids of science, he understands, that a new *Host of Heaven*, too remotely stationed for the naked sight to draw out and review, hath been made to issue into day; each of which shining strangers is the Leader of a troop of others, whose borrowed lustre, too weakly reflected, no assistance of art can bring forward; and that still, when sense stops short, science pursues the great discovery, and reason carries on the progress through the mighty regions of boundless space; the fatigued imagination, tracing system after system, as they rise to light in endless succession, turns frightened back upon itself, and overwhelms the labouring mind with terror and astonishment: whence,

whence, it never can disengage itself till it rises on the wings of FAITH, which bear this humbled creature from himself, and place him before the throne of God; where he sees the mysteries of that Providence laid open, whose care and bounty so magnificently provides for the meanest of his creatures.

Thus piously affected is the Religionist with the sacred horrors of this amazing scene; an universe stretched out through the wide regions of space, and terminated on all sides by the depths of infinity.

But let us turn now to the Man of the world, whom this view of things, rather DEGRADES than HUMBLES. Calmly contemplative in the chair of false science, he derides the mistaken gratitude of the benighted Religionist; a gratitude rising not on reason, but on pride. "For whether, says he, we consider this earth, the mansion of evil, or man its wretched inhabitant, What madness is it to suppose, that so sordid a corner, and so forlorn an occupant, can be the centre of God's moral government! What but the lunacy of self-love could make this short-lived reptile, shuffled hither as it were by Fate, and precariously sustained by Fortune, imagine himself the distinguished care, and the peculiar Favourite of Heaven? As well, says he, might the blind inhabitants of an ant-hill, which chance had placed on the barren frontier of an extended Empire, flatter themselves with being the first object of their monarch's policy, who had unpeopled those mighty deserts only to afford room and safety for their busy colonies. The most, that reasoning pride can tempt us to presume is, that we may not be excluded from that

general providence, governing by laws MECHANICAL, and, once for all, impressed on matter when it was first harmonized into systems. But to make God the MORAL, that is, the close, the minute and immediate inspector into human actions, is degrading him from that high rank in which this philosophy of inlarged creation hath so fitly placed him: and returning him to the people, travested to the mortal size of local Godship: under which idea, the superstitious vulgar have been always inclined to regard the Maker and Governor of the World."

Thus widely distant are the conclusions of the philosopher, from the sentiments of the religious man.

But who are the inlarged thinkers, and on which side reason declares, it is the purpose of this discourse to inquire: Where, we trust, it will be found, that Man, notwithstanding the vast distance between him and his Creator, is indeed the subject of God's MORAL government, just as instinct prompts him to hope, and religion directs him to believe.

I. If from the difference of intrinsic dignity, and native worth in the CREATURE, we can conclude aught concerning the proportioned degrees of nearness in which it stands to its Creator, we shall be forced to give the place of honour to MIND above MATTER.

We are dazzled with the pomp and splendor of a visible Creation: and the august forms of material things hinder us from discerning the despicable qualities of that substance out of which they are fashioned.

fashioned. But view this substance well, and we shall find, that what philosophers call the INERTNESS of Matter, a quality essential to it, places it in the very lowest class of what we can conceive of Being. So that were it not for the virtue of ATTRACTION, a thing foreign and extrinsic to it, Matter would be totally unfit for all the known purposes of its Creation.

To make Matter, therefore, any way considerable, its accumulated bulk must supply for its inherent baseness. And yet the best Philosophy, proceeding on geometric principles, hath informed us, that possibly all the solid matter in the universe may be comprised within a narrowness of limit* still more astonishing than even that immensity through which we find it dilated and expanded.

Thus MATTER carries in it no further marks or notice of a creating Hand, than an aptitude of fall-

* See Newton's Opt. p. 243. 8vo Ed.—"The Sagacity of our author [Newton] (says Dr. Pemberton, "in his excellent View, &c.) has discovered a method "by which—the least portion of matter may be wrought "into a body of any assigned dimensions how great "soever, and yet the pores of that body none of them "greater than any the smallest magnitude proposed at "pleasure; notwithstanding which, the parts of the body "shall so touch, that the body itself shall be hard and "solid. Which shews that this whole Globe of Earth, "nay all the known bodies in the universe together, as "far as we know, may be compounded of no greater a "portion of solid matter than might be reduced into a "Globe of one inch only in diameter, or even less." View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy, pp. 355, 356.

ing back into nothing on the withdrawing the influence of that power which brought it into being. While, on the contrary, a rational MIND presents us with the strongest and brightest image *, it is possible for a Creature to reflect of its Creator. It partakes of that divine virtue, the power of agency within itself. It has a capacity of imagination to turn its regard from the present, to the past and future; an ability of judgment to examine and rectify the informations of sense; and a freedom of Will to give morality to all its thoughts and actions.

But besides this obvious superiority of Mind over Matter in the nature of their essences; there is as sensible a difference in the ends of their Creation, or in the effects produced by the exertion of their several qualities. The material world was made but for the sake of the intellectual; and consequently it is not to be supposed, that MORAL GOVERNMENT, which regards the end, should be neglected; while NATURAL GOVERNMENT, which concerns only the means, should ingross the whole of the Ruler's attention. With respect to the effects produced, Mind will, here again, have the same advantage; moral fitnesses having a greater intrinsic excellence than natural: for Matter being devoid of consciousness, the end of the Natural is only good effected; while the end of the Moral is good felt and enjoyed.

Mind, therefore, cannot but engage the care of Providence; which is confessed to superintend the movements of that Matter, whose combinations ultimately regard only mind and Intelligence.

* Gen. chap. i. ver. 26.

But

But what makes fastidious reason so averse to the idea of God's moral government, when it so easily admits his Natural, is that in this latter case, systems are thought to be sustained and kept in order only by the general laws of mechanism, impressed on Matter at its Creation; or by certain powers lodged within it, to mold it into form, to push it into motion, and to give the true bias to its operations: so that here, the Deity works neither immediately nor particularly, but leaves every thing to the government of those general Laws, or at least to the administration of that secondary power, or Plastic Nature, which superintends the execution of his Laws: while he himself, the sovereign Lord of Being, descends not from his high estate, nor suffers his supremacy to be degraded by a minute attendance on every particle of body; or polluted by an intimate contact with gross impure materiality. On the other hand, they see, moral government must be conducted on different principles. For its subject being free agency, and its object the direction of the effects which such an agency produceth, the attention of the Deity must be instant, immediate, and particular; the relations of Master and Servant, of Lord and Subject, necessarily implying the most close and constant intimacy.

But what shall we say, if the indisposition to God's moral government, on account of this difference, be a mere prejudice? An indisposition not derived from Nature, but the false explanations of its phænomena, obtruded on us by vain system-makers? Indeed, this supposed distance and separa-

tion of the great Artist from his Work, after having once set the Machine a-going by the first impression of his general Laws, is the gratuitous conclusion of a talking Philosophy: The later, and more correct inquiries into the material system, on the unerring experience of the Newtonian physics, have clearly discovered, that God is intimately present to every particle of Matter, at every point of Space, and in every instance of Being. For a VIS INERTIÆ, or resistance to the change of its present state, being an essential quality of Matter, and inconsistent with any motive, force, or power in that Substance, all those effects commonly ascribed to a certain essence residing in it, such as gravity, attraction, elasticity, repulsion, or whatever other tendencies to Motion are observed in Matter, are not powers naturally belonging to it, or what can possibly be made inherent in it. So that these qualities, without which, Matter would be utterly unfit for use, must needs be produced by the immediate influence of the first Cause, incessantly performing, by his almighty finger, the minutest office in the Material Economy; working still near us, round us, within us, and in every part of us.

If, then, in the Natural government of the world, the immediate, the incessant influence of the workman on his work in general, through all its systems up to the whole; and, in particular, through all its lesser portions down even to the minutest atom, be necessary to enable Matter to perform its functions; there is no reason to revolt against that close connexion necessarily supposed between the Creator and

and Creature, in God's Moral government; or to wonder that the order of Rationals should be honoured with the same immediate presence, the same degree of nearness and intimacy, with which the Godhead visits the whole inanimate creation.

II. Hitherto, we have endeavoured to affirm the reality of God's Moral government here below, by considerations drawn from the nature of the Creature. Let us now turn to the CREATOR; and see if those things which human reason discovers of his ATTRIBUTES do not farther contribute to establish this important truth.

But we have been told, and with airs of superior knowledge, that these pretended attributes, as they are commonly specified, and distinguished into natural and moral, are a mere human fiction; invented, by aid of analogy, from the actions, passions, and qualities observable in man: And that the simple nature of Deity is one uniform perfection; of which, infinity being the base, we can have no distinct idea or conception.

To this, it will be sufficient to reply, That it is indeed true, that these specific attributes, from which we deduce all our knowledge of the Nature and Will of God, are formed on analogy, and bear relation to ourselves. But then, we say, such attributes are not on that account the less real or essential. The light of the SUN is not in the orb itself what we see it in the RAINBOW. There it is one candid, uniform, perfect blaze of glory: Here, we separate its perfection, in the various

attributes

attributes of red, yellow, blue, purple, and what else the subtile optician so nicely distinguishes.

But still, the solar-light is not less real in the rainbow, where its rays become thus untwisted, and each different thread distinctly seen, than while they remain united and incorporated with one another, in the Sun. Just so it is with the divine Nature: It is one simple individual perfection in the Godhead himself: But when refracted and divaricated, in passing through the human Mind, it becomes Power, Justice, Mercy; which are all separately and adequately represented to the Understanding.

I shall venture, therefore, to consider the divine perfection, as thus reduced and unfolded to human contemplation, under the name of Attributes, without any fear of mistaking shadows for realities.

And here, I say, that the Natural attributes of the Deity, considered as Creator and Lord (and with these relations only, the Religionist has to do) may be comprised in those of POWER and WISDOM: His Moral, in those of JUSTICE and GOODNESS.

Now I hold, that though the idea of his natural attributes be as clear, in the abstract, as that of his moral; yet the idea of his moral attributes is, in the concrete, more adequate than that of his natural*.

The

* What is here said may enable us to form a proper judgment of the following censure.—" I would not say, " God governs by a rule, that we know, or may know, as " well as he, and upon our knowledge of which he appeals " to men for the justice of his proceedings towards them; " which a famous Divine hath impiously advanced in " a pretended *Demonstration of his being and attributes.*

" God

The reason seems convincing. The moral relation in which we stand to God, as free Agents, is just the same whether man exists alone, or whether he be but a link in the chain of innumerable orders of Intelligences surrounding the whole Creation. Hence we must needs have a just and full knowledge of our duty to him, and of his disposition towards us: On which knowledge is founded, the exactness of our conceptions of his Moral attributes, his JUSTICE and GOODNESS. But the natural relation in which we, or any of God's creatures, stand towards him, as Material Beings, is not the same, when considered simply, as when a portion of a dependent and connected Whole. Because, whenever such a Whole exists, the harmony and perfection of it must first of all be consulted. This harmony ariseth from the mutual subserviency and union of its parts. But this subserviency may require a ministration of government, with regard to certain portions of matter thus allied, different from what might have followed had those portions stood alone; because that precise disposition, which might be fit in one case, might be unfit

" God forbid! But this I may say, that God does " always that which is FITTEST to be done. And that " this fitness, whereof neither that presumptuous dog- " matist was, nor any created being is, a competent " Judge, *results from the various natures and more various* " *relations of things. So that as Creator of* ALL SYS- " TEMS, by which these *natures and relations are con-* " *stituted, he prescribed to himself the rule which he* " *follows,* AS GOVERNOR OF EVERY SYSTEM OF " BEING."—Lord Bolingbroke's Idea of a Patriot King, printed 1749, p. 94.

unfit in the other. Hence we who know there is a Whole, of which our material system is a part, and yet are totally ignorant both of its nature and extent, can have but a very confused idea of that physical relation in which we stand towards God. So that our conceptions of his natural Attributes, his POWER and WISDOM, which are founded on that idea, must, in the concrete, be proportionably vague and inadequate.

Shall we, then, confide in that information which our less adequate ideas of God's power and wisdom afford us of his natural government; and yet reject that which our more adequate ideas of his justice and goodness give us of his moral government? We understand both, and rightly, as assuring us that he presides both in the one and in the other Economy. But let us not forget, that this information is conveyed to us with very different degrees of clearness and precision. A difference, on the side of moral government above natural, in proportion as our knowledge of God's moral attributes is less vague and inadequate than our knowledge of his natural.

III. Thus far from a separate consideration of the CREATOR and his WORKS. Let us see, in the last place, whether the same Truth may not be further supported from a joint view of BOTH of them together.

The idea of an immensely extended Universe tempts weak reason, deluded by sense and narrowed by prejudice, to suspect that this point of space, in which

which man exists, may well escape a busied Ruler, who has innumerable Worlds upon his hands. We do not reflect, that the same reasoning, which leads us to conclude that a point of space may be overlooked in God's providence, piercing through infinite extension, would lead us to conclude, that there may be points of time, throughout infinite duration, which likewise escaped his attention. Yet the absurdity of this, we feel: Why not then of the other? The reason is, because the portions of Time rise only in succession; whereas all the parts of space exist together.

But this IMMENSITY, in which bewildered man considers himself as absorbed and lost, will, on due reflection, evince the very contrary to what it is brought to prove. Were Creation not thus widely extended, the infinity of its Author might perhaps seem less evident. And how far the influence or power of a Being not infinite might reach would be yet more uncertain. But a boundless creation shews its Author to be infinite: So that the remaining question concerning the extent of Providence will amount to this, Whether an infinite Being can extend his care to every the minutest portion of an Universe to which we can set no bounds. A question which will hardly deserve an answer.

" But (say these objectors) the moral system wants one essential mark of divine superintendence, which is ORDER; and this the natural very eminently bears. The Sun keeps its first appointed station; the Planets perform their accustomed revolutions; each Element preserves its distinct properties; and all

all nature concurs to produce that harmony, with which things set out, when God honoured his rising Creation with the attribute of GOOD. But Man deflected early from his primeval righteousness, and felt the miseries of a depraved system ere he had fully tasted the blessings which flow from the rectitude of the Will, and from the even balance of the Affections. And what he so early lost, Time has never yet been able to restore; so that he is likely to continue the same forlorn abandoned creature throughout the whole of his existence."

But these Objections are as vague as they are stale. We have been accustomed to talk at random of the ORDER of natural things; and we suffer ourselves to aggravate the DISORDERS of the Moral.

We can judge but very imperfectly of the whole of the material system. For how small is the portion of Body objected to our view! and how fleeting the period of time allotted for our study!

We see indeed, perpetual peace and concord in our own solar World; but we know little of the astral systems, innumerable and remote. And the little we do know gives cause of suspicion that all there is not so regular and constant, as analogy to what we find here, would tempt us to conclude. New stars have suddenly shone out; and have as suddenly disappeared: Phænomena, which look either like eccentric starts in the Courses of those bodies, or destructive revolutions in their Natures. Nor are we without some appearances in OUR OWN System, to give countenance to these suspicions in the more

remote. Perhaps the Ring of Saturn may be no other than a less irregular fragment of a crushed and broken Globe. The wounds, our own Earth hath formerly received, are yet deep and ghastly; which though skinned over by time and human culture, are seen, by those who pry the least beyond its surface, to bear all the marks and memory of a ruined world.

But to turn from these supposed flaws and maims in some of the parts, to the acknowledged perfections of the general System. Its order and harmony, it must be owned, speak most fully to the sustaining power of its Lord and Master: yet those who have penetrated deepest into its mysteries *, have discovered rooted evils and growing disorders, scarce sensible, indeed, at present, but what, in time, and without the intervening hand of its Maker, will render the frame of nature altogether unfit for the purposes of its general destination.

It is true, it may be said, "That these proceed slowly and insensibly, while moral disorders infect at once, and rush like a torrent over the fair bosom of Creation."

The thing perhaps is too true: but the inference

* — "While Comets move in very eccentric orbs in "all manner of positions, blind fate could never make "all the planets move one and the same way in orbs "concentric; *some inconsiderable irregularities excepted,* "*which may have arisen from the mutual actions of Comets* "*and Planets upon one another; and which will be apt to* "*increase till this system wants a reformation.*" Newton's Opt. 4th edit. p. 378.

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is unjust. This difference is not to be ascribed to a contrary conduct in the Governor, but to the contrary natures of the subjects.

Passive Matter being totally inert, its resistance to the Laws impressed upon it must be extremely weak: and consequently the disorders arising from that resistance, proportionably slow and unheeded: while that active self-moving principle, the Mind, flies out at once from the centre of its direction, and can, every moment, deflect from the line of truth and reason. Hence moral disorders began early, became presently excessive, and have continued through all ages to disturb the harmony of the System.

Nor are the different methods employed by Providence, for the reform of either system, less distinguishable, than the different qualities of Mind and Matter, which occasioned so wide a distance in the progress of their several disorders: as may be seen by comparing them together. From whence it will appear that the disorder and the reform of that disorder, in either subject, are wisely proportioned to one another.

When the inertness of MATTER hath occasioned irregularities in the corporeal system, it hath no ability in itself to redress them. They must go on, though slowly, from bad to worse, till disabled nature calls upon the hand of God for an extraordinary reformation.

But MIND, is ever applying remedies to its own distempers. First, by the check put to them by the stimulation of opposite passions and affections; for

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the appetites are incessantly defeating one another's natural tendencies, and perpetually producing contrary effects. So avarice restrains luxury; self-interest withholds injustice; and sloth quenches ambition: So revenge and hatred procure public justice; treachery often prevents a national destruction; and envy and opposition to power produces a sage and cautious administration.

Thus the jarring interests of corrupt passion keep moral evil within moderate bounds, and give time and opportunity to the mind to recover the government and direction of itself; in the regulation of the appetites and reformation of the will: And this is the second way the mind has of procuring remedies for its own distempers.

In these different methods of reforming either system, the divine goodness is equally displayed; only his power is more visibly exercised in the one, and his wisdom in the other. When blind Matter deviates, as nothing but the conducting hand of God can bring her back into the road of Nature, so the force attending that reduction is so far from impairing her essential virtue, that it heals and restores it. But the like intervention with a rational Agent would impinge upon his freedom. God has therefore so admirably contrived, in the disposition of his moral System, that it should be able to restore itself; by making its very disorders contribute to its reform, in the check the vitious passions give to one another's operations; and in the opportunities with which time supplies the Mind, to assume its native sovereignty, for the carrying on the reformation.

Thus we see God's government in morals becomes as conspicuous as in natural things: For, the disposing causes and effects in such a manner as to make vice defeat its own end, no less manifests the attention of infinite wisdom, than the aiding matter to produce its proper destination, is fitted to display infinite power.

But to perceive the force of what is here said, we must remember, that moral government consists of TWO PARTS; The one, a Provision to prevent evil, and to support good; The other, a destination of reward and punishment, assigned in due proportions to the agents of either: Our subject concerns the first part only: The second is to be explained on other principles; and is not within the limits of this Discourse.

To conclude, The sober inquirer will not be displeased to find at length, that the objections to God's moral Government spring from the weakness of our faculties, and the prejudices attending our situation; joined to a corrupt vanity which makes human reason the measure of all things: and that this Philosophy, which bears such a shew of inlarged and superior knowledge, stands on the narrow bottom of ignorance, and as it rises in vanity, increases in absurdity.

TO HUMBLE HUMAN REASON is the work of true Religion, and, if not the end, is always the issue, of sound Philosophy: but to DEBASE HUMAN NATURE is the low aim of impiety, and the darling project of corrupt manners. Providence laid open the knowledge of his works to excite our gratitude,

and strengthen our attachment to their Author. What the philosopher said of *the knowledge of ourselves*, may be well applied to the knowledge of the universe. " Let us not imagine it was given merely to humble human arrogance: One great purpose of it was to impress upon our hearts a sense of the divine goodness towards man *." To turn this knowledge, therefore, to a brutal debasement of our nature, or a philosophic oblivion of our Lord and Master, is the lowest depravity of an intelligent Being. In a word, if reason and piety have no weight, let natural shame deter us, when we can never merit this distinction, at least from dishonouring the grace by irreverent cavils at the dispensation.

* Illud γνῶθι σεαυτὸν noli putare ad arrogantiam minuendam solum esse dictum, verum etiam ut bona nostra norimus. Cic.

# SERMON III.

## THE LOVE OF GOD AND MAN.

1 Ep. JOHN iv. ver. 20.

IF A MAN SAY, I LOVE GOD, AND HATETH HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR: FOR HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER, WHOM HE HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD, WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN?

THE superior excellence of the Gospel morality above all other summaries of human conduct, whether preached up as a RELIGION by Priests; inforced for LAW by the founders of Society; or recommended under the name of PHILOSOPHY by the Masters of wisdom; is now so generally seen and acknowledged, that even the enemies of Revelation have been forced to confess, It is as well in perfection as in purity, as well in public use as in private, truly worthy the original it assumes.

An advantage which the Ministers of our holy Religion have, with great judgment, taken all occasions to inforce, and with equal solidity to explain.

But there is another circumstance in this divine

economy, which carries the honour of it still higher, as directly tending to prove, That the Gospel morality which is so worthy of God, had, in truth, God for its immediate Author. And this perhaps may not have been insisted on with the frequency and attention which so important a matter seems to require.

The circumstance I mean is, that profound and enlarged knowledge of human nature, which the Apostles discover in their manner of recommending moral duties. In this dispensation, these *weak and foolish instruments*, in the hand of Providence, have foiled and disgraced the boasted wisdom of Greece and Rome; and in that very way wherein their wisdom most excelled; in short and detached precepts, composed for the conduct of human life by men studious to reduce their long laborious searches after happiness into weighty and compendious aphorisms *.

But before I proceed to explain the words of my text, which afford so illustrious an example of this truth, I shall consider, in general, the occasion of them.

The life, the spirit of Christian Religion is universal benevolence. Agreeably to this, we may observe, That the first founders of the Churches, let the occasion be what it would, whatever Discipline they established, whatever Doctrine they inforced, whatever vice or Heresy they stigmatized, or whatever grace or virtue they recommended, CHARITY was the thing still present with them, and always in

* Ῥήματα βραχέα ἀξιομνημόνευτα. Plat. in Protag.

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their care. Charity, *the bond of perfectness*, the *end of the commandment*; that etherial principle, which, like the elastic fluid of the Philosophers, animates, connects, and ennobles the whole System of intelligent nature.

The beloved Disciple of our Lord particularly, who may be well supposed to *know his Master's will*, seems to have written the Epistle, from whence I take my text, with no other design than to recommend this first of Virtues, CHARITY: at a season too, when, as Heresies were springing up apace, some modern Theologists would be apt to think he might have employed his time and talents to more advantage. And indeed one might ask, and scarce absurdly, why so very much upon Charity, in an age when the *followers of the Lamb* had so few inducements to pollute it? For the Faith being yet chaste from the prostitutions of the Schools, and the Hierarchy uncorrupted by the gifts of Constantine, the Church laboured neither under Bigotry nor Ambition, the two fatal incentives of uncharitable Zeal. But the reply is easy. It was the providence of that prophetic spirit which set before them the image of those miserable times, *When iniquity should abound, and the love of many should wax cold:* and they were willing to bear witness, and to record their testimony against the future violaters of *the bond of perfectness*. For I can by no means enter into the refinements of him who discovered that *Jesus* and his followers might preach up love and charity the better to enable a set of Church politicians, some ages after, to tyrannize over

those whom the engaging sounds of benevolence and brotherly love had intrapped into obedience *.

Besides, this is not delivered like a temporary direction: it is not barely recommended: the reason, on which it stands, is given with it; a reason founded in the nature of things, and supported by the very order of Providence. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* An argument, which, for its unaffected

* "Terrors alone, though accompanied with miracles "and prodigies of whatever kind, are not capable of "raising that sincere faith and absolute reliance which "is required in favour of the divinely authorised Instructor and spiritual Chief. The affection and love which "procures a true adherence to the new religious foundation, must depend either on a real or counterfeit "goodness in the religious founder. Whatever ambitious "spirit may inspire him; whatever savage zeal or persecuting principle may lye in reserve, ready to disclose "itself when authority and power is once obtained; the "first scene of doctrine, however, fails not to present "us with the agreeable views of *Joy, love, meekness, gentleness, and moderation.—Charity and Brotherly love* are very engaging sounds; but who would dream "that out of abundant Charity and brotherly love should "come steel, fire, gibbets, rods, &c." Characteristics, vol. iii. p. 114, 115, ed. 4th. But the general premises are as false as the particular inference is absurd. Mahomet did raise that *sincere faith and absolute reliance*, amongst his followers, by *terrors* alone, and without that *affection and love* employed by the founder of Christianity.

simplicity,

simplicity, a modish Freethinker will be tempted to despise; and yet would pretend to admire, had it come from Plato or Cicero.

But some, perhaps, may like the reasoning not the worse for its being evangelical: and such will bear with me while I attempt to illustrate its superior force and beauty.

The argument is founded in the true theory of the RISE and PROGRESS of the SOCIAL AFFECTIONS; of which the following account may afford us some imperfect notion.

An endeavour to preserve its Being makes part of the essential constitution of every created thing. Hence, in the Inanimate, a resistance to outward force; in the Animate, a pursuit or an abhorrence of what is helpful or hurtful; and, in Man, that first and strongest passion of his nature, SELF-LOVE; from whence all the other appetites derive their force, and to which they direct their aim. Its use is to assist the heart to awaken Virtue, and to push out and develope the great principle of BENEVOLENCE.

It is true, indeed, that Benevolence, arising from this source, at first runs thick and turbid; but, as it holds its way, it refines; it purifies and expands its current, till it hath lost all memory of its low original.

For the passion of self-love, aided by the kindred appetite of NATURAL AFFECTION, soon makes an effort to move outward; and looking forward with an instinctive tenderness on our offspring, it is taught to turn its regard, as far back, with rational gratitude

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on our Parents. And though the former be loving ourselves as represented in others; and the latter, only loving others as represented in ourselves; yet the principle of Benevolence being now awakened, it begins, from this moment, to desert its origine: it extends itself to our remoter relatives; and, in a little time, takes in every connexion of domestic life. And, thus continuing to enlarge and widen, by such time as it grows impatient of restraint, the wants and reliefs, the services and protection, which exercise its virtue in this inferior state, enable it to form ideas of a nobler Community, and to trace the outlines and image of a SOCIETY. This produceth another effort, and of a more exalted kind; the object of benevolence being no longer an INDIVIDUAL, but a WHOLE.

From this time the social passions make large advances; and Benevolence, improved and strengthened even by the selfish sense of mutual wants, and the experienced means of mutual relief, extends its influence and efficacy through the whole community of those who need, or can impart, assistance: and thus, on the natural plan of domestic connexions, erects that artificial regimen called Civil society. So that, as before, Benevolence advanced from particular to general; it now riseth still higher, from PRIVATE to PUBLIC. And thus, having a Community for its object, it wins and truly deserves its name: Self-love being now absorbed in the noblest of all social passions, THE LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY; which the Roman Patriot, in a philosophic analysis of its generation and constituent parts, rightly

rightly defines to be that which "includes all other social affections*."

Thus doth SELF-LOVE, under the varying appearance of natural affection, domestic relation, and the connexions of social habitude, at first work blindly on, obscure and deep in dirt; but, as it makes its way, it continues rising, till it emerges into light; and then, suddenly expiring, leaves behind it the fairest issue: which, nobly forgetful of its low beginning, advances on the steps of Virtue, till it reaches to RELIGION.

For the interests of mere animal life being well secured in this first progress to Benevolence; the Mind, which hitherto only cared for the Body, begins to make provision for itself; and, having laid in for the other's wants and weakness, attends, in good time, to its own superior dignity and importance.

And now, placed on so fair an eminence, as the LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY, and its sight purged and defecated from the gross remains of evanescent Self-love, it goes on widening its views, till it hath taken in the whole race of Mankind; considered but as one Policy, or rather, FAMILY; connected by the equal participation of one common nature; and supported by the consequent right of one common measure; and therefore the endeared object of one general benevolence.

Thus DOMESTIC life, which first produced Civil society, and then gave birth to this more generous

* Chari sunt *Parentes*, chari *Liberi*, *Propinqui*, *Familiares:* sed omnes omnium Charitates PATRIA una complexa est. CIC.

and

and enlarged community, at length brings Benevolence round again into itself, as to its full and final completion, by drawing the whole race of mankind into one common FAMILY.

But, in the course of this progress, the Mind, as it widens, becoming fatigued and dazzled by its intense solicitation of this growing Whole, hath frequent need, at its several stages, to catch at and to rest in partial objects.

Hence the origine of FRIENDSHIP *, the solace and splendor of private life; which, while we are advancing towards that only adequate object of hu-

* "*Private Friendship*, and *Zeal for the Public and* "*our Country*, are virtues purely *voluntary* in a Christian. "They are *no essential parts* of his CHARITY. He is not "so tied to the affairs of this life; nor is he obliged to "enter into such engagements with this lower world, as "are of no help to him in acquiring a better." Characteristics, 4th. ed. vol. i. p. 98, 99. The Philosophy of this remark is like the candour. For if (as we shall now see) no one can acquire the love of God without having love or benevolence to man; so neither can this benevolence (which certainly is not a *virtue purely voluntary in a Christian*) be acquired, without having had *private Friendship and zeal for the Public and our Country*. The reason is the same in both cases: the road to the more *general* stages of benevolence lying, all the way, through the more *particular*. *Engagements*, therefore, *with this lower world*, (to use the language of the noble Writer) *are* (contrary to his conclusion) *of* great *help to us in acquiring a better*.— But when Christian Charity had been represented as not springing from Virtue, it was no such bold abuse of the public indulgence to endeavour to persuade us, that the Christian Faith *is not founded in Argument*.

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man attachment, a Whole, teacheth us by the way all our journalary duties to Particulars.

Having thus endeavoured to explain how all the virtues of humanity arise, and have their source, from the gradual expansion of the great principle of Benevolence: we come, in the next place, to consider, how, in its further advances to perfection, RELIGION itself emergeth from it.

In all the objects of love and benevolence, the attractive quality is GOOD. And this connexion being made by the nature and constitution of things, the greater the apparent good, the stronger must the passion grow. Now when the whole human race is considered by us as the object of our love; The steps by which we are led to this high advance in benevolence, such as Man's origine, his common nature, and the dependence of the happiness of the individual on the species, carry us naturally higher; to seek the first cause of so orderly and well-regulated an effect. An inquiry, which terminates in the Author of this, and of all other good: Whom, as such, we are forcibly drawn to pursue, and to aspire after; and in the contemplation of whose nature and attributes we find at last the SUPREME AND SOVEREIGN GOOD: from whence, as we say, all other good ariseth, and in which they are all contained. HE, therefore, challengeth our supreme and sovereign love; which never ceaseth to advance and enlarge itself, till it end in an UNION with him.

And thus the last great effort of benevolence produceth what we call, RELIGION; whose end all agree to be HAPPINESS.

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This is the true account of the rise and progress of UNIVERSAL LOVE: which, as it regards man, our holy faith calls CHARITY; as it regards God, PIETY.

But there were in the apostolic times, and will be in all times, a sort of men who are for catching at the rewards of faith without undergoing this long, but pleasing *labour of love*; and whose frantic aim is to make a sacrilegious divorce between Charity and Piety. These men assume to themselves great merit in loving God, while they treat their Brother with contempt and cruelty. But what says the Apostle, in my text? Provoked at their hypocrisy, he strips off the mask, and brands them with the odious name of LIARS: a name, in Scripture language, of the most opprobrious import; as given to impostors of all kinds; and implying in it every thing corrupt both in moral and religious practice. *If a man* (says St. John) *say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a liar: For he that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* The force and beauty of which reasoning, the foregoing account, of the rise and progress of Benevolence, will enable us to understand.

"You pretend, says the Apostle, to *love God*, though you *hate your Brother*. Vain and fallacious! The love of every object begins, like all our other passions, from self-love: Thus we love ourselves, by representation, in our Parents, and in our Offspring: it extends to our remoter relatives; and so on, through the whole vicinage, to every fellow-member of the Community. And now, self-love refined by reason, and

and sublimed by virtue, begins to lose its nature, and deservedly to take another name. Our Country next claims our love: we then extend it to all Mankind; and never rest till we have, at length, fixed it on the most amiable of all objects, the great Author and Original of Being.

This is the course and progress of HUMAN LOVE; gradually rising from the individual to the whole: as unlike, in its progress as in its purity, to the DIVINE BENEVOLENCE; which, in gracious aid of its Creatures, takes a different course: for, springing from the Whole, it spreads and expands itself through every moral system, till it clasps and embraces the Individual.

And now (pursues the Apostle) I reason thus: Can you, mistaken man! who are not yet arrived at that inferior stage of benevolence, the love of your Brother, *whom you have seen*, that is, whom the sense of mutual wants, and the experience of mutual relief, amongst the joint partakers of one common nature, might teach you to love, can you pretend to have attained the top and summit of this virtue, the love of God, whom *you have not seen*, that is, whose wonderful economy, in the system of creation and government, which makes him so amiable, you appear to have no conception of; You, who have not yet learnt, that your own low system is supported on the great principle of benevolence. Fear him, flatter him, fight for him, as you blindly dread his power, you may: But, to love him, as you know not his nature, is impossible."

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This is St. John's simple reasoning. From whence I conclude for the divinity of that Spirit which could infuse so much sublime knowledge into the pen of a rude unlettered fisherman.

Nor does it less recommend the excellence of our holy Religion than the wisdom of this its Minister: for what could give us a higher idea of Christianity than its making the love of man the previous step, the only way of acquiring, that happy frame of mind, divinely tempered with the love of God; which fits us for what is the end and completion of all religion, the possession of his Spirit?

But this doctrine, which explains the connexion between *the love of God and man*, has still a further use. It keeps our holy Faith pure from SUPERSTITION, BIGOTRY, and FANATICISM: the three worst dishonours to which Religion is exposed.

1. For DIVINE LOVE thus produced, and rising on the knowledge of God's nature, will keep religious worship free of SUPERSTITION, will preserve it from all barbarous and abject ceremonies; and from all selfish and uncharitable devotion. It will remove from God's service all slavish dread of his anger for the neglect of actions indifferent; and all childish hope of atoning for violated morality by the performance of others, equally indifferent.

2. THIS LOVE, standing on the foundation of human benevolence, whose object is God's rational creation, will exclude all the BIGOTRY of false Zeal, which, for God's sake, is ever ready to desolate the earth.

earth. For now, no one can be so absurd to imagine, that the means of perfecting the fruit of faith, which is the love of God, is by shaking the root of charity, benevolence to man. I am aware, how certain propagators of the Faith, sometimes the despicable tools of others' impotency, but as often the viler slaves of their own ambition, have endeavoured to hide their corrupt passions under the thin covering of a School-distinction. While they would persuade us, that it is pure charity to man which thus factiously engages them in, what they call THE CAUSE OF GOD: and that what plain honest men style a want of Charity, when they insult the fame, the fortune, or the person of their Brother, is the very height of this princely virtue, a Charity for his soul—So, indeed, it may be of the Hangman's Charity, who waits for your Clothes. But St. John's, or St. Paul's, it could not be. It could not be that *Charity* which was *not easily provoked, which thought no evil*; *bore all things, hoped all things, believed all things.* A Charity, which begins in candor, inspires good opinion, and rests in the temporal welfare of our Brother.

3. But the *deceitfulness of the heart* is ingenious in expedients to elude the commandments of God. And when Bigotry, by its coarse and butcherly violations of Charity, hath sufficiently discredited its own measures, FANATICISM, with equal rage, though with somewhat a milder aspect, steps in to divest us of our humanity, under pretence, to assimilate it to the divine nature, by annihilating all love of the Creature,

and resolving every other affection into the pure unmixed love of God; as if the least portion of benevolence, communicated to our Brother, was a robbery to our Maker. The fumes of spiritual madness disable these men from seeing so far into the order of things as to understand, that till we can throw off the condition of related Beings, as well as the passion of humanity which results from it, our fellow-creatures will always have a claim to our benevolence. In compassion therefore to such, Holy Scripture has provided a still easier instruction than this negative precept of my text, by the addition of the positive command, THAT HE WHO LOVETH GOD, LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO *.

Such then is the Religion which Jesus came into the world to teach. Whose foundation being laid in the *love of our Brother*, provides for our peace and consolation here; and whose superstructure terminating in the *love of God*, secures and establishes our happiness hereafter.

* 1 John iv. 21.

# SERMON IV.

## THE LOVE OF GOD AND MAN.

PROVERBS xvii. ver. 5.

WHOSO MOCKETH THE POOR REPROACHETH HIS MAKER.

OF all the truths, for the direction of our conduct, with which this royal treasury of ancient wisdom abounds, there is none fuller either of profitable use or profound science than this contained in my text; which so severely censures all expressions of contempt towards those whom Providence has thrown below us on the distressful stage of human life.

And, as we must first clear our corrupt nature from this rankness, before we can attempt to cultivate that immortal amarant of Paradise, Christian love and benevolence; it may not be improper to shew the reason and explain the use of the WISE MAN'S divine aphorism, *Whoso mocketh the Poor reproacheth his Maker.* As much as to say, "He who maketh the Poor the object of his contempt and ridicule, on account of those disastrous circumstances

which attend the want of the goods of fortune, tacitly condemns and reproaches the wise and gracious order of Providence."

But it may not be amiss, previously to consider, In what state it is, that man becomes the object of this criminal *mockery* to his fellow-creature. It is plain, it cannot be in that where he lives uncivilized. For there, the distinctions between RICH and POOR, whereon the insolence of wealth formeth those odious comparisons, which conclude in the contempt of penury, have hardly any place; that sordid condition, which, now contrasted to pomp and grandeur, is become the subject of opulent scorn, being there so general as to admit no room for an unfavourable distinction: But, an universal parity, like darkness, blots out all difference between honourable and mean. Nay, should the civilized beholder be disposed to regard with contempt the wants and miseries of this state, it would not be the criminal contempt forbidden in my text: because the state of nature is not that in which Providence intended we should remain; as appears by the large assistance imparted to us, to free ourselves from the distresses of it. So that if, by a shameful indolence, man should neglect to improve those advantages, the sordid circumstances, inseparable from an uncivilized condition, would have no claim to be exempted from scorn and *mockery:* and, consequently, however CHARITY might suffer, PROVIDENCE was not insulted.

It is only in SOCIETY, therefore, that the Poor become subject to this outrage. And, in this state only,

only, the outrage becomes IMPIETY. For Civil regimen, by inventing and improving the accommodations of life, and by securing, to the owner, what is so invented and improved, changeth the natural equality of conditions amongst men; and introduceth that invidious distinction of POOR and RICH; made far more bitter from the insolence of Wealth, than the envious longings of Poverty. For it is the vicious caprice of Riches to be impatient under a rivalship in the advantages of fortune, and yet, at the same time, insensible to the distresses, and contemptuous to the condition of those who have never striven with them for any of those advantages.

So that there is no circumstance in the distresses of want, but what insulting wealth can make the subject of its *mockery*. To some, their narrow Minds, their gross conceptions, their unimproved talents, are fruitful sources of contempt and merriment. Others, who cannot rise so high in their discoveries, can yet find matter of mirth in their impropriety of phrase, their unpolished manners, their ill air, and unformed figure. Nay to such excess of corruption have unblest Riches brought their possessors, that some can make that very SORDIDNESS itself, that miserable cloathing of poverty, a subject for their scorn and ridicule. So that whether it be for want of those advantages of mind and person which their poverty disabled them from procuring, or whether it be for that very poverty itself, they are sure never to escape the inhumanity of unfeeling wealth.

But how highly criminal these insults are, my text now leads me to consider.

As Society is the only means of procuring the accommodations, and preserving the dignity, of our animal and reasonable nature; and as this nature is endowed with appetites and qualities which make it seek, and fit it for SOCIETY; we must needs conclude, Society to be, what Scripture informs us it is, THE ORDINANCE OF GOD. Now it is essential to this Society, that the goods of fortune be unequally distributed; To the end, that some be goaded on by want to seek their relief in new inventions and improvements, which, tending to the better commodity of life, are objective to the public good; and that others be enabled by abundance, and disposed by the love of ease and pleasure, to promote and encourage those endeavours. For were the goods of fortune to be equally divided, such a distribution would soon return us to the state of unimproved nature, by taking off those spurs to industry, the rewards attending the improvements of *social* life.

Again, as an unequal distribution was required to answer the ends of civil community, so the various tempers, talents, and appetites of men were admirably fitted to introduce, and framed to perpetuate this inequality.

Hence, we conclude, That these different stations in Society were marked out and disposed by the peculiar ordinance of Providence: For He, who decrees the end, must needs be supposed to direct the means conducive to it.

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But admitting this to be the case, it must needs follow, that he who makes any of these conditions of life the subject of his scorn and *mockery*, *reproaches* the justice and goodness of the Director of the system. For that man can never be said to be treated with a common degree of goodness, who is thrust into such a station as makes him the object of reasonable contempt to his fellow-creature; a creature of the same species, and who has no imaginable pretensions to better treatment from the justice of their common Master.

We must needs, therefore, subscribe to the doctrine of the text, That no greater insult can be offered to the wisdom, the justice, or the goodness of God, than by looking down with despite and *mockery* on the poverty of our distressed brethren.

Yet vile as this *mockery* is, the frequent practice hath made it so unheeded, that we see it committed daily without suffering ourselves to be affected with that aversion and abhorrence, so justly due unto it. Hence the serious admonition of the *wise man*; who, the better to assist our humanity in the free exercise of its natural feelings, awakens religion, by branding the vice as an IMPIETY: in every deliberate act of which is comprised all that is most criminal in our degenerate and corrupt nature.

This species of impiety in particular, contains the basest INGRATITUDE towards God, and INHUMANITY to our Brother: Which, including the violation of all our relations as reasonable creatures, sinks us below the very beasts themselves.

And can there be a worse ingratitude towards the great Disposer of all things, than for man to make any station in Society the object of his contempt? Society, which God himself *ordained* for the advancement of human happiness! and which can be only procured by means of those various degrees and subordinations, productive of that condition, which we impiously make the matter of our scorn. Is this a fitting return for the care and kindness of that Master, who drew us from a state of savages, who led us to a life of civility, and hath put it in our power to improve the blessings of Providence, and the endowments of reason, most suitably to the dignity of our nature!

We may reflect, likewise, that we, who thus offend, do by the peculiar indulgence of Heaven, reap all the benefit of Society; while those we injure are so circumstanced as to bear all the inclemencies and hardships of it; a burthen, which weighs the heavier on them, as it is borne alone. And yet if we look into ourselves and them, and compare what we find on either part, we shall discover nothing which could dispose the *righteous Judge of all the earth* to decree a state of ease and affluence for us, and condemn them to indigence and labour. Nay, were we not blinded by self-love, we should soon find, in this despised quarter, men whose understandings and honesty, whose piety and diligence, whose care and affection for their families, whose conscientious submission and obedience to authority, might well enable them to dispute, and qualify them to carry the station of honour, from their Betters.

But

But how detestable must this ingratitude appear, when we reflect further, That these low stations, the object of our scorn, were ordained for no other civil purpose than to support us in that distinction of abundance, from the wanton abuse of which arises all this guilt of contempt which so justly subjects the offender to God's righteous judgment. So that we carry our impiety to such a height, when we *mock the poor*, that we even *reproach our Maker* with the very blessings which, at their expence, he heaps upon ourselves.

And this leads me to the second point, the INHUMANITY to our Brethren. Indeed the very considerations, which upbraid our ingratitude to our *Maker*, expose our inhumanity to the *Poor*. For can any thing be more inhumane than, when the stations of Society are thus necessarily unequal, and when Providence has thrown our lot amongst the few who reap in ease the accommodations of it, at the expence of multitudes, who had as good a claim to that distinction; Can any thing, I say, be more inhumane than to treat their less happy condition with outrage and contempt? A condition, from which no superiority of nature, no advantage of intellectual, or merit of moral endowments, nothing but the established order of things, hath exempted us, or subjected them.

If to this, we add (as hath been just observed), that their low condition was established to support us in the proud distinction of abundance, it must greatly inflame our guilt, and increase our confusion. For

to

to the Poor it is, that we are immediately, and almost solely, indebted for every advantage of ease and pleasure, which improved and refined society affords (advantages which we are but too apt to esteem the principal blessings of society); it being by their incessant toil that the elegancies of polite and fashionable life are procured for us. While all the reward They have, for becoming benefactors to the Great and Wealthy, is but the hard and scanty sustenance of a miserable Being. A Being only less miserable than That, which the insolent Rich-man himself must have been content to drag, in a life unassisted by the sweat and ingenuity of the Labourer and Artificer. For were it not for the incessant drudgery of the Poor, we should soon be brought back again, even amidst our largest accumulations of fortune, to a condition of distress which would soon wipe out all that odious circumstance of insolent comparison, from whence arises this mean, this vile, this unmanly contempt for the lower stations of our fellow-citizens.

But what is alone sufficient to strike us with horror at so wretched an inhumanity, is the consideration of those numerous disorders of body, those Maladies, to which a restless application of all their faculties for the supplial of our imaginary, and therefore endless wants, perpetually subjects the industrious Poor. How, by toiling in pursuit of commodities, they themselves are never to enjoy, Some are confined to the pestilential damps of mines; and Others exposed to the rage of elementary, and solar fires: These doomed to struggle with the various inclemencies of distempered air: and Those, to undergo

undergo the rotten vapours of fenny waters, or the corrosive humidity of the ocean: Here a too sedentary occupation viciates the torpid fluids: and there, a too violent destroys the overstretched tone of the solids: The baleful materials employed, or worked upon, often strike the artist with acute distempers; and the manner or method of working as often draws on chronical: so that the shop of the artificer may be truly called the Warehouse of Death. The maladies, which swarm so thick and constant in it, have even afforded matter for the charitable Physician to compose distinct works of the *Diseases of Artificers* *: Where we find the distempers of each Labourer to be as numerous as the Tools he works with; and as peculiar as the materials he employs.

Such then is the nature of the crime so severely condemned in my text; and such the circumstances which so deeply aggravate it. The serious consideration of these things will be abundantly sufficient to confound the pride of Opulence, and shame the Rich man into those duties to God and his Brother, which his STATION more indispensably requires; that very circumstance which, to the dishonour of human nature, he hath suffered to mislead him into so scandalous a violation of both.

This salutary humiliation will lead him easily back into the road of Piety and Charity. He will grow warm with gratitude to his *Maker*, and soften with

* Bernardini Ramazini De morbis Artificum.

compassion

compassion for his brother. But gratitude and compassion, which stop at acknowledgments and commiseration, are as great an insult on God and Man, as that more open *mockery* condemned in my text.

The only acceptable way, of testifying our repentance, in an impious age so forward to cavil at the ordinance of Providence, is to discharge those duties which have a natural tendency to vindicate its ways. God hath given us every encouragement, to perform them. He hath put it in the power even of miserable man, and how great is that honour! to justify the economy of his system: For the faithful discharge of what our various relations to our Fellow-creatures require of us, will repair all those deformities of defect and excess, which nature or fortune is for ever casting over the fair face of Creation. For what is it (in the opinion of impious men) that so greatly discredits the dispensations of Providence, but that state of misery to which the bulk of mankind is condemned, in order to support the Few in the full tide of wantonness and riot? Would the Rich once begin to think themselves the dispensators of Providence for the Poor, Impiety would soon be forced to confess, that the goods of fortune, though unequally divided, were yet wisely and graciously administered: All men would see, that the pouring down wealth on high stations was only a sacred deposite to supply the wants and distresses of the low: Wants very wisely imposed, as a necessary means of producing those accommodations which Man's improved nature indispensably requires.

This,

This, and this only, can atone for the enormity condemned in my text. This will support the Order, and is consequently the best vindication of the Economy, of Providence; which wants nothing to render it as respectable to the world, as it is illustrious in itself, but this reasonable compliance to the common dictates of Humanity and Religion.

# SERMON V.

## THE CHARACTER AND OFFICE OF THE MESSIAH.

1 Cor. i. 30.

JESUS CHRIST, WHO OF GOD IS MADE UNTO US WISDOM, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION.

IN these memorable words, the Apostle, Paul, hath given us a full and exact Character of the Personage of the holy Jesus, and of the nature of that Religion he was sent to propagate amongst Men.

*Wisdom* and *Righteousness* describe a Messenger sent from God with the publication of the eternal Law of Truth and Right: and *Sanctification* and *Redemption* denote the Messiah foretold, who was to atone for man's transgressions, and to restore him to his lost Inheritance.

These two important matters, the first of which respects the worker; and the second, his work; I propose to make the subject of the following Discourse.

I. The

I. The Jews, at the time of Christ's advent, were in full expectation of their long promised Messiah. So that St. John tells us, the multitude on their being miraculously fed by Jesus, cried out, *this is of a truth that* PROPHET *that should come into the world* *. And indeed, this judgment was such a one as the People are generally wont to pass; crude, undigested, and made up of a mixture of truth and falsehood. It was true, and they argued rightly, that the worker of this miracle was a PROPHET SENT from God. But it was false, and they were too hasty in concluding, that This was the proper proof of his being the PROPHET FORETOLD in their sacred volumes. For though one of the marks of this Prophet (as it must be one of every messenger sent immediately from God), was the working Miracles; yet there were many other circumstances, respecting both his time and person, which were to unite in that Character, before he could be said, *to be, of a truth, that Prophet that should come into the world.*

This, therefore, on the whole, must pass for a popular prejudice in favour of the Son of God; but yet a Prejudice: Less unreasonable, indeed, than many, they presumed to entertain against him: As when they thought an idle Proverb sufficient to controvert the strongest evidence of his Messiah-character. *Can any thing good come out of Nazareth,* saith Nathanael, *an Israelite in whom there was no guile* †, but, as appears from hence, a great deal of foolish prejudice.

* Chap. vi. 14. † John i. 46, 47.

The

The two great Prophets of God, placed by him at the head of each of his Dispensations, were Moses and Jesus. In this they differed, that Moses bore the simple Character of a DIVINE MESSENGER; Jesus, the more complex one of a DIVINE MESSENGER FORETOLD. For, though the deliverance of the seed of Abraham was predicted in the sacred records along with the deliverance of the seed of Adam; yet as the first was only a type and prelude of the other; it was not Moses the deliverer of the Jews, but Jesus the deliverer of mankind, the finisher of God's great work of REDEMPTION, who had the distinguished honour of being foretold; as well by intimation in a mysterious ritual, as by a more open declaration in the oracles of the Law and the Prophets.

However, the preliminary ground of credence was the same, in both; namely, that the doctrines they taught were worthy of God. This worth consists in their TRUTH, and in their IMPORTANCE.

1. No falsehood can issue from the fountain of Truth. Whatever therefore pretends to come from God, which contradicts our common notions of his Being and attributes, must of necessity be condemned for an imposture, notwithstanding any appearance of extraordinary power in the propagator of such doctrines. And should an imposture happen to be attended with these circumstances of power, it could not be fairly deemed an imputation on God's goodness, since the Holy Spirit hath foretold, that deceivers should come with *lying miracles*, almost

of force to draw aside *the very elect themselves*; and since against the illusions of these deceivers, God hath given us so sure a test and criterion as are the common notions concerning his Being and Attributes.

2. Nor is it, in the second place, a sufficient ground of credence, that what is thus taught be simply true. It must be truth of importance. Such as in its immediate tendency respects the *good of man*, and in its ultimate, the *glory of God*. These are the necessary qualities of such doctrines as we esteem WORTHY the extraordinary patronage of Heaven.

This then, may be called the preliminary ground of Credence, but not the CREDENTIAL itself. An important Truth is indeed worthy of God. But neither the Truth, nor the importance of it, shews that it had God for its immediate Author. Because it is impossible to measure the bounds of human capacity, or to ascertain what progress an improved understanding may make in the discovery of divine and moral truths. We have been told indeed, but by men of no great authority, "That the proper credentials of a divine mission are the truth and importance of the doctrine proposed." But in this, they are neither ingenuous nor serious. They hold no extraordinary Revelation at all. So that this is only one of their DISGUISED SENTENCES: which, like most others from the same quarter, is conveyed under an equivocal expression, confounding common speech, and making TRUTH and DIVINE TRUTH the same thing.

The

The proper Credential, therefore, of a Messenger from God is the POWER OF WORKING MIRACLES. A sort of evidence fitted to the capacity of all men. For the difference between true and false miracles, that is, between what we should admit and what we should reject, does not consist in the first's being the finger of God; and the other, the operation of a finite Being: for then, man, who knows so little of the material and intellectual world, would have no criterion to distinguish between the true and false: But the difference consists in this, That true miracles are such as are worked in confirmation of doctrines worthy of God; and false, such as aim to support doctrines unworthy of him. Our security for the first conclusion is the goodness and justice of God, which will never suffer us (I do not mean the *good* in distinction to the *bad*, which is a low and foreign consideration, but mankind in general), to be brought into a situation where no human means can be found to prevent our falling into error. Our security for the second, is the certainty that immoral doctrines could never come from God; and the uncertainty what power other agents may have to produce appearances contrary to the common course of nature.

This seems to be the true notion of a MIRACLE, as it subjects all which pretend to that character, to the decision of human judgment; every man being able to distinguish between what is done in confirmation of doctrines worthy of God, and what is done to support doctrines unworthy of him. As on the other hand, that which defines a Miracle to be

the immediate work of God, must needs be a false notion of it, because it would render the Credential of Miracles an insufficient security, by reducing us to an inability of distinguishing between the true and the false.

On the whole, then, we conclude, that MIRACLES are the full Credential of a SIMPLE MESSENGER from God; such as we suppose MOSES to be.

But, now, something more is necessary to establish the complicated Character of a MESSENGER FORETOLD, such a one as JESUS challenged to himself.

It is not enough for such a Character that he works the most amazing Miracles; unless, at the same time, he be found to have those various marks upon him which belong to the Messenger foretold. For having assumed both parts of the prophetic Character, and united them in his own person, he is no longer at liberty to disjoin and prove them singly: so as that, when by miracles he hath established the Character of a *divine* Messenger, this will remain unshaken, though he should fail in proving himself, by other evidence, the Messenger *foretold.* For not only all falsehood is incongruous to a divine mission, but is dissociable with all truth. Whatever supernatural evidence, therefore, is produced by such a personage, comes in equally in attestation of both parts of his Character; and if it fail in one, cannot be made to support the other.

Now Miracles can be no proof of his being the Messenger foretold, when his person, actions, and fortunes agree not, in all circumstances, with the prophetic descriptions of that Messenger. For

Miracles

Miracles cannot change times and places; or make that to be, which is not, and that not to be, which is.

From hence, therefore, we draw this second conclusion, "that Miracles were not the full, or only, Credentials of Jesus, who was a Messenger foretold." There needed another kind of evidence to establish his pretensions: and that was, that he exactly answered to the description of the predicted MESSIAH, or, in other words, that he accomplished the Prophecies concerning him. And this we say he did in the amplest manner.

But now it may be asked, "Were his Miracles of no use to establish his Messiah-Character?"

The answer will lead us to the second part of what we are to speak to: The nature of those ancient prophecies which foretell the promised Messiah of the Jews.

We have observed that the office of this Messiah was to compleat and perfect God's great work of REDEMPTION; to which, all his various dispensations to mankind were directed. As therefore Jesus was the finisher of the whole economy, it is natural to suppose that neither the worker nor his work would be forgotten under any of those dispensations. This is indeed the fact: He is remembered under all of them, though in a manner conformable to the specific nature of each. Thus, when he is revealed to Adam, the representative of human kind, he is spoken of as the destroyer of their spiritual enemy who should *bruise the head of the Serpent* *: when promised to the Patriarchal family,

* Gen. iii. 15.

he is represented as the glory and blessing of their Race, the *Shiloh, to whom should be the gathering of the people* *. And when to the Mosaic Republic; as a *Prophet* and Lawgiver *like to* its first founder †. So that in all these graphical descriptions, though the drawing was the same, yet as the colouring was different. this would be one source of obscurity.

Again, as each dispensation was preparatory to what succeeded, the relation between the type and antitype occasioned the prophecies concerning the succeeding dispensation to be intermixed with others respecting the fortunes of the present. Thus, for instance, the spiritual victories of the Messiah are intermixed with the temporal deliverances atchieved under the Jewish Leaders. And this is another source of obscurity.

Lastly, the Christian Dispensation is in its nature entirely opposite to the Jewish; and yet the prophetic account of it is conveyed under ideas altogether appropriate to the Law. But this, by the wisest designation of Providence. One important part of Jesus' his office was to break down the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, to extend the privilege of being the select people of God to all the race of Adam, to free his countrymen from the bondage of the ceremonial Law, to teach all men the worship of God *in spirit and in truth*; in a word, to change temporal blessings into eternal. But, at the time of making those predictions, the Mosaic system had not run out half its course: and so was not to be

* Gen. xlix. 10. † Deut. xviii. 15.

exposed

exposed to popular contempt by an information that it was only the harsh rudiment of one more easy and perfect. Now an exact and plain description of the Messiah's office, which would have told the people this secret, must needs have indisposed them to the reverence due to their LAW. A mysterious repose, therefore, was to be cast over these *living Oracles*, which should present no more to the dull conceptions of the People, than a large increase of blessings, to be procured in the *age to come*, by some mighty Deliverer. And the expedients employed for this purpose bear the clearest marks of the divinity of their Author.

The first was in the EXPRESSION; by representing those spiritual blessings figuratively, under the carnal terms of the Law. Civil peace, national triumphs, and worldly plenty, to denote religious rectitude, victory over sin and death, and large effusion of the Holy Spirit.

The second expedient was in the SENSE. For it being necessary to the carrying on the general scheme of Providence, of which the Mosaic institution made so considerable a part, that the various fortunes and illustrious deliverers under this dispensation should, from time to time, be foretold for the consolation of those to whom the prophecy was delivered; and for the trust and confidence of posterity which should see it fulfilled; for this end, I say, the Holy Spirit made use of these intermediate events for types and symbols of the sufferings and victories of the Messiah, the final object of Prophecy. This all-wise contrivance of Providence produced what Divines call the

SECONDARY SENSE OF PROPHECY*. And of this species is the body of those predictions which relate to the Messiah.

These two expedients therefore are another source of mysterious obscurity.

What now are the inferences which must be drawn from the NATURE OF ANCIENT PROPHECY, as here explained? They are these:

1. That the only reasonable way of establishing the evidence rising from it, is to set the various predictions together, to compare them with one another, and to illustrate what is obscure in *this* Prophecy with what is clear in *that*; to reconcile the seeming discordancy in particular parts by the order, union, and harmony which results from the general economy of the whole.

2. The second inference is, that even after all the advantages gained by the use of this method, there will still remain many obscurities in particular prophecies, which human wit alone will never be able to remove or clear up.

But, in contradiction to the first inference, we have been lately told, "That Prophecies are to be considered and inforced like Miracles, singly and independently, as so many distinct arguments: and that to consider them in a chain, and as having a mutual connexion with one another, is a fanciful and

* See Div. Leg. Book vi. sect. 6.

romantic

romantic system, which deserts the foundation laid by the Evangelists for their explanation *."

But the Objector seems not sufficiently to have considered the very different natures of these two extraordinary interpositions of Providence, in support of its dispensations, MIRACLES and PROPHECIES.

Single Miracles refer to no Whole or System. Each is independent of another, and hath its own entire evidence in itself. If we consider a miracle, as in the object of the performer, it is simply the credential to a divine mission: if we consider it as directed to its subject, it is a display of the wisdom, the justice, or the goodness of that Being by whose power it is performed. And in either case, it carries its evidence along with it, and receives no aid or addition from without. Indeed, it would be absurd to seek it in any other place. For, put the miracles as near together as you will, and embody them as closely as you can, the stronger will give no support to the weaker. When Jesus rebuked † the winds and the waves, and a calm ensued; If any one should pre-

*—"The Evangelists applied them [the Propheeies] "singly and independently on each other, to this or that "occasion, as so many different arguments for the gene- "ral truth of the Gospel.—He [the Bp. of L.] seems to "have rejected the whole evidence of Propheey as it was "understood and applied by the Apostles and Evan- "gelists; and to have substituted, in its place, a romantic "system or fanciful chain of antediluvian Predictions."— Dr. Middleton's Examination of the Bp. of London's Discourse concerning the use and intent of Propheey, pp. 5, 8.

† Matth. viii. 26.

tend,

tend, that the quiet naturally followed the emotion, and was not the immediate effect of divine power, the urging his walk upon the Sea * would not remove the objection. So again, when Peter † raised Dorcas from the dead, Should an unbeliever say, she was only in a swoon, the urging the restoration of Lazarus, after he had been dead four days ‡, would hardly silence the cavil. The reason is plain, and the same in both cases. The similar Miracles had no dependance on one another.

The Prophecies on the contrary, though, like the Miracles, they may be considered singly and apart; and the peculiar object of many of them be clearly fixed from their own evidence; yet the truth of the greater part, and the fullest conviction in all, arise from their being seen in one view, and considered as a dependent, connected, and entire Whole; because the general object of all is one compleat Dispensation, consisting of various and subordinate parts, which reflect mutual light and add mutual lustre to one another. Hence the clearer Prophecies must always communicate of their evidence to the more obscure. Thus if any one should doubt over what part of God's moral dispensation the Messiah should reign, whether the Jewish or Evangelic, when he is prophesied of in the words—*Yet have I set my King upon my holy Hill of Zion* §; he may be fully satisfied by the Prophecy of Jeremiah: *Behold the day* is come, saith the Lord, that I will make *a* NEW COVENANT

* Matth. xiv. 26. † Acts ix. 41.
‡ John xi. 39. § Psalm ii. 6.

*with*

*with the house of Israel, not according to the covenant that I made with their Fathers, &c.*—— *But—I will put my* LAW INTO THEIR INWARD PARTS, *and write it in their Hearts**.

And the reason of this difference is evident; The subject of prophecies is ONE; and the subject of miracles are MANY.

In opposition therefore to so plain a truth, it would be idle to tell us, "That Jesus and his Disciples employed the Prophecies singly and independently on each other, to this or that occasion, as so many different arguments for the general truth of the Gospel." We own they may be thus employed: and when they are so, they are considered under the nature of Miracles, and urged, as the objector well expresses it, *for the general truth of the Gospel.* But what then? If, because there are some prophecies plain and clear enough to stand alone, on the principles of those to whom they were addressed, and therefore the Evangelists have put them into that position; must the dark and obscure ones, which require the aid of others to support them, be treated in the same manner? Are we not rather to conclude that their different circumstances require a different management? This is so far from deserting the foundation of the Evangelists †, that it is prosecuting divine knowledge upon the same principles.

* Chap. xxxi. 31.

† "It is certain there was no occasion to desert that "foundation which the Evangelists had laid, and to "take refuge in a precarious system." Exam. of the Bp. of Lond. p. 24.

These

These very Evangelists employ single maxims of morality, independent on each other. But is this any proof that there is no system of morals: Or that our urging those truths systematically, and under all their dependencies, which the Evangelists proposed singly and without connexion, is a *deserting the foundations of the Gospel?*

Would you have the whole truth? it is this: The fittest way of conveying instruction to the People, whether prophetical or moral, was to urge their verities singly and independently. For long deductions and chains of reasoning were unsuitable to the capacities of those with whom Jesus and his disciples were concerned. But *systematical and political Divines* (as they are here called) were engaged with Philosophers and Free-thinkers. And the fittest way of urging Prophecies and moral truths to such, was to propose them systematically and in a chain. For it had been pretended that certain Scripture-prophecies have no support from fact; and that certain Gospel-precepts have no foundation in reason.

2. We come now to the second consequence result-from the nature of Prophecy. And this is, that there will be still many difficulties in particular Prophecies, which mere human wit, with all the assistance of science, will never be able to remove.

And here comes in the answer which we promised to give to the question "concerning the use of Miracles to establish the Messiah-Character."

And

And this we shall venture to make in the affirmative; and to declare, that they are of great use.

It hath been already observed, that no miracles are sufficient to prove those Prophecies to relate to Jesus, which, on the logical rules of interpretation, can be plainly shewn to relate only to another: because Miracles cannot make that to be true, which is false.

But the conclusion is very different in matters which human wisdom must leave for ever in doubt; and which, on account of the obscure delivery of the Prophecy, Reason finds itself unable to resolve. In this case, the word of an infallible Interpreter (and such we must esteem him who is endowed with the power that Jesus exercised) hath all the authority requisite to decide in doubtful questions. Human wisdom cannot resolve which of two things was in the Speaker's meaning: but the wisdom residing in that Agent, to whom God hath imparted the knowledge of all divine mysteries, can resolve it; and the Miracles of Jesus shew that this knowledge was communicated to him.

And Authority hath here the force of the most convincing evidence. Common reason, in the affairs of civil life, hath always directed men to the like solution. In all their doubts they have recourse to superior wisdom. On this, they regulate their conduct, and rest satisfied in the security of its decision. The Authority in question, to fix the sense of doubtful Prophecies, differs only in this, that the evidence of the resolved truth is unspeakably greater, as divine wisdom exceeds human.

And

And we have the same security (infinite Goodness), that we shall be kept from error, when Miracles are employed to fix the sense of doubtful Prophecies, as when more generally applied to support the character of a divine Messenger. Miracles being a species of evidence which reason directs us to confide in, as well in one case as in the other.

With regard therefore to Prophecies thus circumstanced, we say, that the authority of a worker of miracles may be fitly applied to shew, that *he is of a truth that* PROPHET *that should come into the world.*

So that we see, licentious writers, from Porphyry down to Collins, have misemployed their pains in proving, "That the Prophecies which are said to concern the Messiah are so indeterminate, that on the common rules of interpretation, we can never apply them with certainty rather to him than to any other Jewish Deliverer." For was it true, as it certainly is not, all that could be inferred from thence is only this, That such Prophecies conclude nothing in favour of a particular application, till the obscurities, arising from the intermediate manner in which they are delivered, be removed. There are some obscurities which no human lights can penetrate, but there are none so impervious but must give way to the divine.

It is the proper resort, therefore, of superior wisdom to decide this doubtful question, and tell us, to whom such Prophecies belong.

And must not He, who inspired the Oracle, know of whom he made the prediction? For it was the

same spirit who cast a mysterious veil over Truth in the Jewish Prophecies, and became manifest in the Christian Miracles. Thus much these licentious writers themselves will be forced to own, while they reason, as they do here, on the supposition of real Prophecies, and only pretend to bring in question their received meaning.

On the whole, therefore, we conclude, That to clear up doubtful Prophecies by the application of Miracles, is a species of evidence which determines the judgment with as perfect assurance as if the prediction had been conceived in the plainest terms of grammar, and in the directest propositions of logic.

But the mistake lay here, The enemies of our Faith saw clearly enough that Miracles could not establish a sense of Prophecies in opposition to all human rules of interpretation; and therefore concluded that Miracles had no influence on Prophecy at all. This was too hasty. They saw in what case the authority of Miracles was excluded; but they would not see where it came in; and so, because a Miracle could not do every thing in establishing the Messiah-character, they would suffer it to do nothing.

But let us leave the perversity of men, to adore the good Providence of God; whose POWER, in the use of Miracles, is so admirably fitted to supply and clear up the defects and obscurities, which his WISDOM suffered to remain in the Prophecies.

II. Having explained and vindicated the Character of this last great Messenger of God; the subject leads

leads me to consider the nature and genius of the Religion he was sent to propagate amongst men. So that having seen the TRUTH of his mission, we may now understand the USE and NECESSITY of his Work.

St. Paul, in the words of my text, hath marked out those essential qualities which distinguish the CHARACTER and OFFICE of Jesus from all other, whether true or pretended, Messengers from God. *Jesus Christ*, says he, *is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Santification, and Redemption.* Now as this was addressed both to the Gentile and Jewish converts in the Church of Corinth, it is contrived to shew, in one view, how Christianity hath reformed the depravities of PAGANISM, and supplied the deficiencies of the LAW.

This beautiful summary of Gospel-blessings (for now we turn from the Worker to his work) is so artfully adapted to the Writer's views and purposes, as will deserve a particular explanation.

And here let me previously observe, That though the *Wisdom* and *Righteousness*,—the *Sanctification* and *Redemption*, here mentioned, be each respective to the whole race of mankind; yet the GENTILES are more particularly concerned in the WISDOM and RIGHTEOUSNESS; and the JEWS in the SANCTIFICATION and REDEMPTION. In explaining, therefore, these four essential offices in the Messiah-character, I shall consider each of them as referring distinctly and particularly to the One or other of these two great divisions of the religious world.

I. And

I. And first, concerning the reformation of the GENTILES, by Gospel *Wisdom* and *Righteousness*.

1. *Jesus Christ*, saith the Apostle, is *made unto us*, WISDOM. That is, He was *made* Wisdom unto the Gentile world by instructing it in the knowledge of the true God; his nature and attributes: And by explaining the relation in which man stands to his Maker. A WISDOM, which, at this time, the Gentiles greatly wanted: most of them being destitute of that knowledge; and all, without exception, ignorant of that relation.

The early descendants of Noah soon lost the revealed knowledge of their Creator. Which though indeed revived by an extraordinary dispensation of Providence, was however confined within the gates of a single family: While the rest of mankind, partly by too great a confidence in that unfaithful guardian of Truth, TRADITION; and partly from too little attention to their better instructor, REASON, fell into the most senseless Idolatries.

For living at first scattered abroad in independent tribes, their gross, untutored minds could rise no higher than to the sensible causes of good and evil: the most considerable of which being the elements and heavenly bodies, These became the first object of their worship and veneration. And having experienced them to be, sometimes, the authors of health and plenty; and sometimes again, of pestilence and famine; they from thence began to entertain an opinion of good and evil Demons.

But being now collected into Bodies, and formed into Communities; the sudden supplial of all the

wants of life, which followed, was so sensibly understood, that mistaken gratitude took another channel, and turned as strongly on their deceased Lawgivers, the generous procurers of this their improved condition; whom they soon venerated and exalted into gods.

But as civil life introduced and encouraged the culture of the mind as well as body; both the first, and second mode of worship were, from their manifest absurdities, in danger of falling under the popular contempt. To prevent this mischief, the Legislator diverted the steady attention to either, by confounding them together; making ELEMENTARY and HERO-WORSHIP representative of one another; and then laying on a new cover over both, by the invention of a third species of idolatry, SYMBOLICAL of the other two. But a further account of this matter, and how the two original and simple forms produced that more monstrous compound; in which, first of all, brutes, and then, stocks and stones were worshipped;—from what accidents of error, from what contrivances of fraud, these prodigies arose, which hath since given so much exercise to the learned, all this is without the limits of the present discourse*. Let it suffice to observe, that St. Paul hath not aggravated the case, where, in his Epistle to the Romans, he says, that the Gentile world had *changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things*†.

* See the Divine Legation, Book IV.

† Chap. i. ver. 23.

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This was the condition of the Pagan world in general. And though, from time to time, some thinking men arose amongst them of a more enlarged understanding than the common, who, as the same Apostle observes, could, from the *visible things* of a created world, infer the *eternal power and Godhead* of its Author *; yet even these, as he adds, when *they knew God, glorified him not as God*†; never so much as once attempting to introduce his worship to any People or Nation amongst whom they lived, or where they had the greatest credit. So that the one true God, though KNOWN in most places, was no where publicly WORSHIPPED but in the land of Judæa only.

This leads me to the second point, "The universal ignorance in the Gentile world, of the relation in which man stands to his Creator." The Philosophers and Lawgivers had concurred in a general opinion (the absurdity of which is sufficiently exposed by the success of the Hebrew Sage and Legislator in a different conduct) that to teach publicly the knowledge, or to establish nationally the worship of the one true God, would be of great disservice to society; and had therefore kept all consideration of him enclosed within the veil of their MYSTERIES. And further, to hide from their own consciences the fraud and prevarication of such a measure, they first brought those whom they had intrusted with that knowledge, and afterwards, themselves to believe, That the FIRST CAUSE was

* Chap. i. ver. 20. † Ver. 21.

an extra-mundane Being, too excellent, as well as too remote, to be approached, and addressed to, in the first instance. On which account, they said, he had delegated the government of the world to inferior Deities, his substitutes; and had made Them the immediate objects of religious worship. In cultivating this superstition, they found another advantage: it gave a shew of reason to that senseless Polytheism whose rise and progress we have just described: and, at the same time, screened it from the approaches of over-curious inquirers. But then it could not fail of producing very fatal mistakes concerning the close and near relation in which man stands towards God.

All this shews how expedient it was for the happiness of Mankind, that *Jesus* should *be made, unto us, wisdom*; when the most enlightened teachers of it amongst the Gentiles *professing themselves to be wise became fools,* by their *not glorifying him as God* whom they had clearly discovered to be the only true one.

Let us now see the need the Jews had of this *wisdom*; for though, as was said, it be principally objective to the state of the Gentile world, yet it hath its after-view to the followers of the Law; who wanted, likewise, though not in the same degree, the aid of *evangelic wisdom.* For the Character of a national, tutelary Deity, under which God had been pleased to assume the patronage of their idolatrous Forefathers in Egypt; the Form of their civil constitution, which was Theocratical; and the Genius of their ceremonial worship, which was fitted,

fitted, through the grossness of their prejudices, to secure the great end of their separation, preservation from idolatry; all these, I say, concurred, amongst a perverse people, to beget wrong notions of the ATTRIBUTES OF GOD; as if They stood by nature, or adoption, in a nearer relation to him than the rest of their fellow-creatures; being chosen for the objects of his special care, on account of some inherent excellence; or at least for some secret fondness which God had, and would indulge, for the illustrious race of Abraham. Vain notions, and of dangerous consequence! which, though they received no real support from *Moses and the Prophets*, were yet, by length of time, so rooted and interwoven in the passions and affections of that people, as to need a *new Law* to weed them out.

And thus was *Jesus* indeed *made Wisdom* both to Jew and Gentile; by instructing the ignorance of the one, and reforming the error of the other, in that supreme species of Wisdom, the knowledge of the true God.

2. The advantages of his being *made*, *unto us*, RIGHTEOUSNESS, come next to be considered.

As the ignorance of, and mistakes concerning, the FIRST CAUSE were so universal in the Gentile world, it can hardly be supposed that the state of VIRTUE was in any very good condition amongst them. And in fact, we find that their Morality was neither speculatively solid, nor practically sincere.

The fitness of some actions and the unfitness of others are discoverable from the NATURAL RELATIONS and essential difference of things. And this fitness and unfitness are further supported by a MORAL SENSE, or an instinctive approbation of good, and dislike of evil. But still, the proper ground of moral obligation is the WILL OF GOD: Because all obligation implies an obliger; and *moral fitness* is only a rule to direct us to the will of the obliger; nor is the *moral sense* any other than his arbritrary impression, to dispose the human will to a conformity with the divine. The Will of God, therefore, is the real ground of obligation; or that which properly maketh man accountable for his actions *.

Now this only solid foundation of morality the Gentile world always wanted: and indeed, while under the ignorance and mistakes mentioned above, could not but want. For their false Gods having, as must needs be, from the private views and intrigues of the Priests their interpreters, many different and contrary Wills, these could never be made the ground of a consistent morality: and the true God being esteemed an extra-mundane Being, who left his Government to others, afforded no WILL at all, for this purpose. So that their only recourse for instruction and practice was to the MORAL SENSE, and NATURAL RELATIONS of things; which, though they might present a specious system to the understanding, had not weight or authority to incline the Will *.

* See Divine Legation, Book I. Sect. 4.

For

For their practice of Virtue (to come to the second point) was as impure as it was unstable. In morals, Example hath the strongest influence: and this influence increaseth in proportion to the dignity of the subject in which it is found. The Example of the Deity, therefore, which enforceth itself on a principle of Religion, must needs have the strongest and widest influence. But the actions of the Pagan Gods, recorded in their sacred stories, were so immoral as could not but highly corrupt the practice of their worshippers. And Antiquity informs us, that in truth it did so.

Nor should a moral cause of this degeneracy from Virtue be forgotten. St. Paul assures us that God, for their punishment *in not retaining him in their knowledge, gave them over to a reprobate mind, to* DO *those things that are not convenient.* Hence, as he tells us, they were *filled with all* UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, *fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness*, &c.* The account goes on, in so black a catalogue of vice, as sufficiently shews that, at the time *Jesus Christ was made unto us righteousness*, the Pagan world was sunk into the lowest state of misery and corruption.

Nor were the Jews themselves so sound, in these particulars, as not to want this great physician of the Soul. And what was said of the *Wisdom* is true of the *Righteousness*, mentioned in my text; it hath a secondary reference to the chosen People. For, the wrong notions they had conceived of the *God of their Fathers*, and of the relation in which they

* Rom. i. 28, & seq.

stood to him, had much vitiated and deformed their social virtue. They confined the precept of loving their Brother to the descendants of their fraternal Tribes; and neglected and despised the rest of the sons of Adam; who, because ritually unholy and profane, were deemed to be naturally unrelated to them. A Principle which made them as unfaithful subjects, when for their crimes they were sentenced to the yoke of the Gentiles, as they were merciless neighbours while independent and more powerful; neither *rendering to Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's*; nor to God the things which at all times he principally required of them—*to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly* before him *. This, and other errors which their false Traditions had introduced, and which some original compliances with the *hardness of their hearts* had occasionally countenanced, made Jesus tell his followers, that, *unless their* RIGHTEOUSNESS *should exceed the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven* †.

From what hath been said then it appears, that Jesus, as he *is made unto us, wisdom and righteousness*, is to be considered under the Character of a MESSENGER SENT from God, to instruct men in the ways of RELIGION and VIRTUE. How much such a one was wanting, we have endeavoured to shew in a fair representation of the state of BOTH, at the time of his coming.

II. But this was not the whole of his Character. He was a MESSENGER FORETOLD; as appears, and

* Micah vi. 8. † Matt. v. 20.

is

is insinuated from what is further said of him, That he was *made unto us Sanctification and Redemption.*

To such as are unacquainted with the present state of Theology amongst us, it may perhaps seem strange that I should stop, in this place, to observe, that *Sanctification* and *Redemption* are as true and essential offices in the Character of Jesus, and as extensive to Mankind, as the *Wisdom* and *Righteousness* assigned unto it. But there are some amongst us, who give a figurative sense to the latter attributes in my text; and in reality confine the character of Jesus to that of a Messenger sent from God, to instruct the world in truths of religious *Wisdom*, and moral *Righteousness.*

But to suppose, that when the Son of God is said to be *made wisdom and righteousness,* we must understand by it that he really taught men *Wisdom* and *Righteousness*; and yet, when he is said to be *made sanctification and redemption,* he did not really *sanctify* and *redeem*; but that, by instructing men in a more pure and perfect worship, he only excelled all the IMAGINARY; and abrogated all the CARNAL *sanctifications* and *redemptions,* both of Jews and Gentiles; to suppose this, I say, is the highest violation of all rational interpretation: and gives us a meaner idea of the eternal Son of God than a Pagan Sophist would have entertained of him on hearing St. Paul's first sermon at Athens. But this perversity can be charitably accounted for no otherwise than from a violent disgust these men have taken at some current explanations of the *doctrine of Redemption*; fitter indeed to discredit, than to confirm

or

or recommend this fundamental principle of our holy Religion. But this is a matter which requires a different treatment. I shall consider it in its proper place *; and now proceed with the subject before us.

I have observed, that as *Wisdom* and *Righteousness* were principally addressed to the Gentiles; so *Sanctification* and *Redemption* were directed to the Jews. But, as a regard to the Jewish people was not excluded in the former; so neither was a regard to the Gentiles excluded in the latter.

It is easily seen why the representation of Jesus's *being made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness* is particularly addressed to the Gentiles: They most wanted those blessings. Nor is it more difficult to apprehend why the representation of his being *made unto us Sanctification and Redemption* is particularly directed to the Jews: for in their custody were deposited the *living Oracles*, which explain that state and condition of man, from whence arises the necessity of *Sanctification* and *Redemption*.

I. But let us consider the words as they lie in order. *Jesus Christ* (says the Apostle) *was made unto us* SANCTIFICATION; that is, he *sanctified*, or made us holy.

It was a received opinion in the ancient world, that human nature had contracted a stain or pollution: and that not only particular purifyings, but also some general *Sanctification* was necessary to put man in a capacity of being restored to the favour

* Divine Legation, Book IX.

of

of the Deity. Whether this Opinion arose from the remains of a Tradition concerning the FALL; or from every man's conscious feeling of his own disorders; or whether both concurred to its establishment, is very uncertain. However it had that tone of the voice of Nature, Universality. And though it gave occasion to infinite superstitions in the rituals of national lustrations, yet the necessity of some real *Sanctification* seems fairly to be deduced from it.

When God, therefore, separated the Jewish people, the first object of their Legislator's ministry was to render them pure and holy. And as by reason of the inveteracy of their prejudices, and the grossness of their apprehensions, the real means of purifying human nature were to be conveyed under the cover of such rites and ceremonies as were then in use amongst men; so because the common way of making a people holy, was to adopt them into the protection of a tutelary God; and of rendering particulars clean, was by ablutions and other cathartic rites; the Almighty was pleased to assume the titles of their national God, and regal Governor; and to institute, in the offices of his worship, lustrations and expiatory sacrifices, as well for particulars as the Community. On these accounts it is that he tells them, *Ye shall be unto me a* KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, *and an holy nation**: for the regal and sacerdotal were the two peculiar characters of ancient *sanctity*.

*But the* LAW *having only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things,*

* Exod. xix. 6.

*could*

*could never make the comers thereunto perfect* *: therefore the true *Sanctification* of mankind was reserved for the ministry of Jesus; when being collected together into one people, under his government as LORD; and received into his protection by the *justification of faith* in him as MESSIAH, they became *a* ROYAL PRIESTHOOD *and an holy nation* †, as the Apostle calls them, alluding to the title given to the Hebrews by Moses; and transferring it to the Christian Church in a completory sense, as it was applied to the Jewish, in a typical.

But a matter of so high importance as the completion of God's religious dispensations, in the final *Sanctification* of mankind, will deserve a fuller explanation.

When the *Sanctifier* (whose character and office cannot well be considered separately) was accused, by those who traversed his ministry, of purposing to overturn the established Religion, he answered, *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil* ‡. How he executed this commission, in the character of SANCTIFIER, we are now to consider.

Under the old Law, God was pleased to take upon himself the office of KING; he assigned the office of PRIEST to Aaron; and that of PROPHET, to Moses; the Priest being the MEDIATOR or Advocate for men to God; and the Prophet the MESSENGER of God to Men. Now the Messiah taking all these offices on himself; and uniting them in his

* Heb. x. 1. † 1 Pet. xi. 9.
‡ Matt. v. 17.

own

own Person, did, in the truest and exactest sense, *fulfil the Law and the Prophets.* For by *the Law and the Prophets* is meant the whole of the Jewish dispensation, as delivered by Moses, and explained and illustrated by those holy men, whom God, from time to time, raised up to govern and instruct his people.

This institution consisted of three parts; the POLITICAL, the CEREMONIAL, and the MORAL, under which was contained the SPIRITUAL.

1. The *political* part was a THEOCRACY. The purposes of this extraordinary form of government, as they related to the carnal administration of the Mosaic Economy, I have consided elsewhere *. But the spiritual end was to introduce the dominion of the Son, which was to be extended to all mankind. The *Prophets*, the interpreters of the Law, whom, as well as the *Law* itself, Jesus tells us, he was sent to *fulfil*, inform us at large, how this peculiar regimen was to become an universal blessing. First by the resignation of the Theocratic dominion to the Son †; and secondly, by extending that dominion over the whole race of mankind ‡. Thus the Messiah *fulfilled* both what the genius of the *Law* and the inspiration of the *Prophets* foretold of him; as it concerned the government political. And in so doing he assumed the title of KING *of the Jews.*

2. The second divison of the Mosaic Law was the *ceremonial:* a ceremonial, which heavily loaded every

* See Divine Legation, Book V. Sect. 2.

† Isaiah ix. 6, 7. ‡ Ibid. chap. xi. 10.

part

part of God's worship with multifarious and irksome rites. Now though the common condition of humanity declares that this duty, especially the public part of it, can never be decently or properly discharged without the aid of some exterior ceremonies; yet the minute observance of so complicated a Ritual tends rather to stifle than to invigorate the spirit of devotion. We may therefore reasonably conclude, that these things, which have no moral worth or value inherent in them, were not instituted on their own account, but for the sake of some occasional good they were found capable of producing. And of this, we have clear intimations in the writings of the Prophets. They frequently tell us that the *ceremonial Law* was of no use or value in itself; but that, the thing in which God most delighted, was the moral Law of righteousness *. If then the Jewish Ritual was of so slight account with the Institutor himself, it may be reasonably asked how it came to be so minutely delivered and so scrupulously exacted in his service? In this likewise the Prophets will instruct us. It was imposed to restrain a headstrong people from Idolatry, to which they were violently and obstinately carried †: and, for that purpose, it had a perpetual reference to the then reigning superstitions. But as this security from idolatry (considering them as a People) was for the sake of preserving a sound and pure foundation for the future dispensation, of which, This was only the

* Amos v. 21, & seq. Micah vi. 7, 8.
† Jerem. vii. 22, 23. Ezek. xx. 24, 25.

rudiments,

rudiments, it pleased the divine wisdom that the ceremonial Law should not only be directed against those superstitions, but should likewise be typical of all the great parts of that future dispensation: and whoever examines the *ceremonial Law* with the care and attention so important a study requires, will confess that both one and the other were equally in the intention of the Lawgiver *.

The ultimate end therefore of these rites being to prefigure the death and sufferings of Christ, He may, with a peculiar propriety, be allowed to call himself the *fulfiller of the Ceremonial Law*. It being incomplete and destitute of its final purpose, till Jesus had performed the whole of that mission which the *ceremonial Law*, by prefiguring, had predicted. And when that was once performed, the Types of course were to cease. Now these types consisting of various kinds of sacrificial rites, Jesus by offering up himself on the cross for the sins of mankind, as was foretold by the Prophets, eminently *fulfilled* the ceremonial Law, in quality of PRIEST.

3. The last and noblest branch of the Jewish Law was the *Moral:* which instructs man in all his relations, whether to his common nature, to God, or his fellow-creatures. This, though delivered pure by Moses, and according to the truth of things, did yet, like the two other branches (as we have seen above) need the master-hand of this divine Teacher: who, in delivering to mankind a more perfect system

* See Divine Legation, Book IV. Sect. 6.

of

of moral duty, as was predicted of him *, discharged the office of PROPHET, or of *a Messenger from God*; as in that of PRIEST he discharged the office of *the Messenger foretold.*

But under the *moral*, as we have said, was comprised the *spiritual.* And it was this which was more peculiarly the prophetic office: whose business it was not only to give to every part, in this economy, its due rank; but to foretel the future fortunes of all; How the Political should be EXTENDED; the Ceremonial FULFILLED; and the Moral, PURIFIED and exalted.

Thus we see, from the nature, end, and condition of this *political*, *ceremonial*, and *moral* economy, that Jesus was the *fulfiller of the Law*; and, from his doing this in the very manner the inspired men of old predicted, that he was likewise the *fulfiller of the Prophets* †. Hence he became truly and properly the SANCTIFICATION of the *People of God:* and through them, of the whole *Church of Christ.*

This is that aggregate or corporate holiness to which the Gentile nations blindly aspired; and of which, the Jewish people had gained only the shadow.

But, besides this GENERAL *Sanctification*; which, as we have shewn, is the immediate office of the Son; there was a PARTICULAR, by which each individual was cleansed and purified; and this was performed through the ministry of the HOLY SPIRIT,

* Isaiah, xi. 5. and xlii. 1, 4.

† See Divine Legation, Book VI. sect. 6.

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the *Comforter*, whom Jesus, on his leaving the world, had promised to send upon the faithful, to remain with them for ever *. Who, by the effusion of divine grace shed abroad in their hearts, effects that purity of mind, which all other ritual modes of private lustration tried at in vain, or at best did but typically represent.

Now both these purifications, the aggregate and particular, make together, that true *Sanctification*, of which Jesus is said in my text to be the author, and bestower on mankind.

We have observed that *Sanctification* and *Redemption* are addressed to the Jews primarily; as *Wisdom* and *Righteousness* are to the Gentiles. But as the former graces had a secondary reference to the Jews, so the latter, as we shall now see, have the same reference to the Gentiles.

The want of a *Sanctifier* in the Pagan world was still more urgent and deplorable than in the Jewish. For the Gentiles having received DEMONS for their tutelary Gods, and devoted themselves to unclean spirits by their national worship, the PUBLIC was become, in the saddest sense of the word, PROFANE. And, by administering their demonic rites in all the unnatural and exorbitant practices of murder and uncleanness, PARTICULARS were become in the highest degree IMPURE.

Thus Gentile impiety and pollution being at its height, and the Jewish holiness and purity exterior only, and imperfect, there was a pressing NECESSITY of *Jesus*'s being *made unto us, Sanctification.*

* John xiv. 16. and xvi. 7.

2. But this was not the ultimate benefit bestowed on man, through the ministry of Jesus. *Sanctification* was only preparatory to a greater blessing: and, like the wedding-garment in the parable, a habit of dignity given to appear in before *the Lord our Redeemer.*

For, in the last place, the Apostle tells us, *he was made unto us*, REDEMPTION.

Amongst the many gracious dispensations of God to Mankind, the Mosaic history informs us of one, in which *the depth of the riches both of his Wisdom and Knowledge* claims our more particular admiration. And this is the FREE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY to the first man; and, through him, to his Posterity, on the easy condition, we find, annexed unto it: which Adam having too easily violated, he and his whole race returned into a state of mortality and corruption.

From this bondage under death and sin, God, in his infinite mercy, decreed to deliver us. And the condition of a remitted forfeiture being as absolutely in the breast of the Remitter, as the condition on which the blessing was originally conferred; he was pleased, it should be done by ONE man's willingly offering himself to death for an atonement for ALL. That *as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one should many be made righteous* *.

How agreeable this succinct account of Man's FALL and RESTORATION is, to what the best and most received philosophy teacheth us both of God

* Romans, v. 19.

and

and Man, shall be considered at large in a fitter place *.

This future *Redemption* of the world had been promised, even from the time of the *Fall*, to the holy men of old, in terms more or less obscure, as best fitted the dispensation under which the prediction was delivered. The Chosen People had a more defined image of it in their typical redemption from the slavery of Egypt, and their admission to the temporal blessings of the land of Canaan. It was still more circumstantially figured in their public ritual, through the ministration of expiatory sacrifices, performed with many ceremonies plainly descriptive of the great sacrifice on the Cross, for the spiritual *Redemption* of mankind.

This people, then, must hear with conviction, and, as many of them as were unprejudiced, must confess with pleasure, that *Jesus Christ*, by being *made unto us Redemption*, was the true completion of the *Law and the Prophets*.

Nor was this blessing of *Redemption* without a secondary reference to the state and condition of the Gentiles; whose Religion was not merely ineffectual, like the Jewish, to redeem them from the chains of death and sin, but such as had brought them under the more disgraceful bondage of subjection to the Devil, those wicked spirits, whom they worshipped and adored as their patron Gods.

This was the condition both of Jews and Gentiles, when the Messiah came to set men free. And here let it be observed, in honour of those two Charac-

* Divine Legation, Book IX.

teristic miracles, the *raising the dead*, and the *casting out devils*, that the one elegantly designed his office of redeeming the Jews from the *power of the grave*, and the other his office of freeing the Gentiles from the *tyranny of Demons*. The beauty in this disposition of the economy was too striking to be passed over in silence: Otherwise, I think, even this moderated use, of spiritualizing the miracles, should be forborn; as fanciful and precarious. We can conceive no otherwise of the miracles of a divine Person coming from God, let the peculiar mode of his dispensation be what it will, than that they should be objective to the corporal infirmities of men. Now between these and their spiritual disorders, there is, by their common qualities of want and distress, so much similitude and so natural an analogy, as affords no ground of reasonable supposition, that one was a designed or prophetic representation of the other.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew, which was the main purpose of this discourse, *That Jesus is made unto us, Sanctification and Redemption*, in as true and real a sense as he is our *Wisdom and Righteousness*. Nor is this a matter of small moment. The teaching *Wisdom and Righteousness* made his mission EXPEDIENT: but the bestowing *Sanctification and Redemption* made it NECESSARY.

To instruct the world in the knowledge of one God, and in the practice of moral virtue, was, without doubt, putting us into the road of the divine favour; and making our attainment of the supreme good more easy and expeditious. But God, whose

*mercies*

*mercies are over all his works,* and who, in this very revelation, hath informed us, that from those to whom little is given, much will not be required *, would have received his miserable creatures to his mercy, in what condition soever he had suffered them to remain, if so be they had taken care to make the best use of the little that was afforded them.

But *Sanctification and Redemption* do more than shew us into the road of God's favour: They restore us to the free privilege of LIFE AND IMMORTALITY; which man having forfeited, by a breach of the condition on which it was bestowed, had no pretence to reclaim; so that whenever it was restored, it might be given on such conditions as the all-gracious Donor should think fit to impose. It is restored: and the conditions are FAITH in, and OBEDIENCE to, a crucified SAVIOUR; who, by this sacrifice of himself, became the *Sanctification and Redemption* of mankind. The consequence is, that these are not only useful and *expedient* for procuring God's favour, but absolutely *necessary* for our recovery of life and immortality.

This is placing CHRISTIANITY on its proper basis, a foundation of real strength and solidity.

But when the presumption of men tempts them to disjoin what God hath put together, not only the benefits of that union are lost, but other various, and unthought-of evils arise, which subject the

* Luke xii. 48.

religious economy, thus abused, to every kind of injury; dishonouring the Author of our Faith; and exposing the Christian profession to perpetual insults.

This was never more unhappily verified than in the case before us.

1. For he who considers Jesus only in the light of a Republisher of the Law of nature, can hardly entertain a higher opinion of the Saviour of the world than some have done of SOCRATES, whom Erasmus esteemed an object of devotion, and many a good Protestant hath thought to be divinely inspired. For was not Socrates, by his preaching up *moral virtue*, and by his dying to bear witness to the *unity* of the God, *made*, to the Grecian people, and (by means of their extended commerce of politeness) to the rest of mankind, *wisdom and Righteousness?* And what more did Jesus? for, according to the principles of this paganized Christianity, his titles of MESSIAH and REDEEMER are reduced to mere figurative and accommodated terms. But these bold extremes men ran into through their ignorance of the nature of those prophecies which foretel his advent; and the absurdity of those systems which pretend to explain his office.

2. As this Theology degrades Jesus to the low condition of a Grecian Sophist; so it renders his Religion obnoxious to the insults of every daring Impostor.

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He was sent, say these new Doctors of the Church, to teach mankind the worship of the true God, and the practice of moral righteousness *.

" This will be readily allowed, replies an understanding MAHOMETAN †: And on this very principle, WE hold, that when Jesus had done his office, and mankind had again relapsed into *anti-christian* Idolatry and Polytheism, as before into *Pagan*, God sent OUR PROPHET, who worked the like sudden and sensible reformation in the NORTH-EAST, that your Prophet did in the NORTH-WEST."

What reply now will our rational Divine make to this apology for ISMAELISM?

All he has to say is " That Jesus and his Apostles have every where intimated, that his Gospel is the last of God's dispensations; on the terms of which our final doom is irrevocably to be decided: so that all future pretenders to the like office and character must needs be esteemed impostors."

But here a DEIST would come in, and take advantage of our distress; for it is to be observed alike of all these shifting defences of fanciful, and unscriptural systems, that they only supply new arms to

* A celebrated Frenchman, who writes on all subjects indifferently, and, perhaps, knew better what he was about than these Divines, goes still further, and affirms, That Christianity is not only no more than the Religion of nature perfected, but that *it could not possibly* be any more.—" Nôtre Religion revélée n'est même, et *ne* " *pouvoit etre*, que cette Loi naturelle perfectionnée." *Discours sur le Theisme*, par M. de Voltaire.

† The Alcoran teaches, that Jesus did not suffer on the cross. Yet Mahomet denied our Saviour's Divinity.

to the various adversaries of our faith; A Deist, I say, would be ready to reply, "That it is indeed true that Jesus hath declared his own Mission to be the LAST: but that this is the artful expedient of every pretended Messenger from Heaven, in order to perpetuate his own scheme, and to obviate the danger of an antiquated authority. The Impostor, Mahomet himself, hath done the same. He, who here obtrudes his armed pretensions upon us, hath secured the duration of his sensual Religion by the very same contrivance: A thing, in his ideas, so much of course, that he did not even object to Jesus's use of it, who had employed it before him; and for no other purpose than to cut off his, and all following pretensions to the like character. On the contrary, he avowed and maintained the general truth of the Nazarite's commission. Now (pursues the Deist) a method employed by a confessed impostor is taken up with an ill grace by the defender of true religion. But I draw a further consequence (says he) against the Gospel,

Why then such aversion to the *passion*? Evidently for this reason, the doctrine of REDEMPTION followed; and that completed the scheme of *revelation*, and (as we shall see) shut out the Impostor's pretences. M. Otter, a very intelligent traveller, of the Academy Royal of Inscriptions, tells us of a conference he had with a learned Persian. The Mahometan said, they reverenced all our sacred writings, except St. Paul's—*qu'ils respectent tous, excepté Saint Paul*. [Voiage en Turque et en Perse, vol. i. p. 22.] Why was this *exception*? On the same principle: because St. Paul is full of the doctrine of REDEMPTION; explains the Christian system by it; and makes the whole Faith depend upon it.

Gospel, from this representation of Christianity. For if the preaching of moral truth and righteousness were the whole of Jesus's character and office, then his mission did not answer its purpose, the lasting reformation of mankind, in the knowledge of God, and in the practice of virtue: since the world soon fell back again into the state from which Jesus had delivered it; as appears from the history of the times in which Mahomet appeared, and the advantages he made of that degeneracy."

Thus subjected to the insults and injuries of every kind of impostors, who set upon deluding the credulous, either by inventing NEW Revelations or by decrying the OLD, do these REPUBLISHERS expose the holy faith of Jesus: That faith which, we are told, was *founded on a rock*, impregnable to the assaults of men and demons; to the sophisms of infidelity, and the prestiges of imposture! And so, indeed, it is, if we will take it as we find it; if we will receive it as it came from above; if we will preserve it pure and entire as it was delivered to the Saints, THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD, BY THE SON OF GOD, IN THE VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF UPON THE CROSS.

This secures * the character of Jesus from the insults of false pretenders; and his Gospel from the injuries of false reasoners.

For, first of all, if Jesus did, indeed, *redeem*

* See Div. Leg. Book IX. where the conformity of this Doctrine to right reason and the nature of things is evinced at large.

mankind,

mankind, and restore them to their lost inheritance, the scheme and progress of revelation is completed: which beginning at the LAPSE, naturally and necessarily ends in the restoration and recovery of LIFE AND IMMORTALITY by the death and passion of our Lord. CHRISTIANITY considered in this view (and in this view only Scripture gives it us to consider) soon detects all the artful pretences of imposture; and secures its own honour by virtue of its very essence: the great scene of providence being now closed, in a full completion of its one, regular, entire, and eternal purpose.

Secondly, if Jesus indeed *redeemed* mankind, then did he neither preach nor die in vain: it not being in man's power, with all his malice and perverseness, to defeat or make void the great purpose of his Coming. For though one part of his Mission was to instruct the world in *Wisdom* and *Righteousness*, which it was in man's power to forget and neglect; yet, what is chiefly essential in his character, and peculiar in his office, the *Sanctification* and *Redemption* of the world, man could not frustrate nor render ineffectual: For it is not in his power to make that to be undone which is once done and perfected.

The fastidious Caviller therefore hath employed his pains to very little purpose in attempting to discredit Revelation from this topic. His laboured discourses on the moral state of the world, before and since the coming of Christ, are quite beside the question. For, though, where the comparison is fully and impartially stated, I will venture to say, the

the advantage will be found to lie on the side of our Religion: yet supposing the truths preached by Jesus, and the assistance given by the Holy Spirit, have not much improved the general morals of mankind; How does this tend to the discredit of the Gospel? unless the Gospel can be proved to have no natural tendency to make men better? But this is so desperate an undertaking, that, I believe, infidelity will hardly be persuaded to engage in it. Indeed the contrary is so true, that, as I have shewn elsewhere, when you lay together the state of PAGAN and CHRISTIAN virtue, one manifest and essential difference is found between them; which is this, That in the Gentile world, men often acted wrong UPON PRINCIPLE; in the Christian always AGAINST PRINCIPLE *. Now, not to insist upon the necessary restraint this must be upon vice; it plainly demonstrates the NATURAL TENDENCY of the Gospel-truths to make men virtuous, and, to enforce them with a stronger impulse, did not suit the genius of a rational religion, whose object was free agency.

But the proper answer to this idle cavil is taken, as we say, from the topic before us. Instruction of the world in *Wisdom* and *Righteousness* was but the secondary end of Christ's mission. The first and primary, was to become its *sanctification* and *redemption*; the one must needs be common to every revelation coming from God; the other is peculiar to the christian: and this, as we have shewn, cannot possibly be frustrated, or rendered ineffectual.

* Div. Leg. Book iv. § 2.

To

To conclude from all that hath been said: As we should not affect to pry into the nature of those things which God hath been pleased to withhold from our search, and to cover with the sacred veil of Mystery; so neither should we reject a Truth, expressly delivered, because we may not fully comprehend all the reasons on which it stands. In a word, as we should not venture to go on where the silence of Scripture directs us to stop; so neither should we presume to stop where, with so loud a voice, it commands us to go on.

Men have been made sufficiently sensible of the mischiefs attending the first of these indiscretions, the being *wise* ABOVE *what is written:* I have here endeavoured to shew, that the other, the being *wise* AGAINST *what is written*, is not attended with fewer inconveniences. What then remains but to choose the middle way, the way to become *wise unto salvation*; and, neither, in practice or speculation, to ADD to, nor to DIMINISH from, the WORD OF GOD?

Let us therefore religiously adhere to the doctrine of my text in its just extent, That *Jesus Christ, of God, is made unto us* WISDOM, *and* RIGHTEOUSNESS, *and* SANCTIFICATION, *and* REDEMPTION.

# SERMON VI.

## THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE MESSENGERS OF THE GOSPEL.

MATT. x. ver. 16.

BEHOLD I SEND YOU FORTH AS SHEEP IN THE MIDST OF WOLVES: BE YE THEREFORE WISE AS SERPENTS, AND HARMLESS AS DOVES.

SUCH was the direction given by our blessed Lord to his disciples, when he sent them out to preach the *glad tidings of the Gospel.*

The CHARACTER of the Christian Mission is denoted in these words, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep:*—And the CONDITION of an unbelieving World in the following, *I send you in the midst of Wolves.* Though the Faith was to be propagated only by the mild measures of persuasion, yet even this would provoke the *wolfish disposition* of the *powers of darkness,* to put in ure all the iniquitous contrivance of fraud and violence for its suppression.

Their provident Master, therefore, in the concluding words of my text, delivers them a rule for the innocence and prudence of their own conduct. *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

A direction

A direction equally respecting their PRIVATE and their PUBLIC Character. Whereby, the first might correspond with the dignity of their office; and the other, with the objects of their care. So that, as men, the HUMAN virtues; as missionaries, the SOCIAL are recommended to their practice: and both, under the familiar images of the serpent's wisdom, and the innocence of the dove.

What these *human* virtues are, the allusion in the figurative EXPRESSION will discover: What the *social*, must be determined by the occasion of the PRECEPT. *Be ye therefore* (says the blessed Jesus) *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* A direction, conveyed in two proverbial sayings, whose import the Disciples perfectly understood.

The first alludes to a vulgar superstition of the ancient world, which gave credit to certain artists, who pretended to the power of rendering serpents innoxious by the force of charms, and incantations. The men who traded in this imposture, in order to hide their frequent miscarriages, made the people believe that some of these serpents had gotten a trick as good as their own; which was to *shut their ears* to their inchantments. This counterplot was as readily believed, as the other's magic power, in an age, when every thing was well received, which excited the hearer's admiration. Hence the proverb of *the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears; which refuseth to hearthe voice of the charmer, charm he never so sweetly:* by which, Moralists would infer the wisdom and safety of abstaining from unlawful pleasures.

The

The second, of being *harmless as doves*, alludes to as ancient and as fanciful an error of the Naturalists, that *the dove is without a gall*; or, at least, bears it not within *.

The whole of this monition therefore, to the disciples in their private character, implies, That they should learn to abstain from all unlawful, unmanly and intemperate pleasures; and to suppress in themselves all the sentiments of rage, anger, and revenge. The serpent's wisdom being directed against the CONCUPISCIBLE passions, as the dove's innocence is against the IRASCIBLE: and both together make one general precept for the subjection of our brutal nature to the rational: in which consists the exercise of the *human* virtues.

Could any thing be more harmless than this method of propagating religion? Could any thing be more holy than the manners of its propagators? What regard to the rights of men, to the Laws of society, was enjoined to the Offerers of the Gospel! What neglect of the interests of flesh and blood was required of the Receivers of it! TRUTH was the lasting foundation on which Jesus erected his Church: and VIRTUE the living principle which was to actuate its members.

Indeed the purity of his intentions and the rectitude of his measures are so evident from the evangelic history of his life and death, that the

* "Ανδρα μὴ ἔχοντα χολὴν αὐτοφυῶς, ἀλλ' ἀφ' ἑτέρᾳ δεχόμενον γράφουσιν [Αἰγύπτιοι περιστερὰν ζωγραφοῦσιν, ἔχουσαν τὰ ὀπίσθια ὀρθά. ἐν ἐκείνοις γὰρ τὴν χολὴν ἔχει. Horapollinis Hierogl. l. ii. c. 48.

most

most stubborn infidel is ready to clear him of fraudulent imposture, and to centre all his suspicions in a well-meaning ENTHUSIASM.

This is the last miserable refuge of obstinate impiety. And the order of the discourse, which now brings us to consider the precept of the text, as it respects the messengers of Jesus in their PUBLIC CAPACITY, will enable us to expose it in all its nakedness.

*Be ye* THEREFORE *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* Wherefore? because they were *sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves*; that is, unarmed and defenceless amidst the *powers of the Prince of this world.* The virtues, recommended to them under their public capacity, were, we see, objective to these powers; and therefore, of the *social* kind; and consisted in prudence and justice; as the other, recommended to them in their private capacity, and objective to themselves, were of the *human*; and consisted in temperance and forbearance. And here let me observe, in honour of God's word (which should be the principal end of all discourses from this place), the mutual connexion and reciprocal influence, which the two parts have on one another. The *human* virtues were to recommend their MISSION; and the *social*, to recommend their PERSONS. But to proceed.

If Jesus had been an Enthusiast, there was no time when the fanatic spirit would so forcibly have broken out as at this juncture; the critical juncture of sending his disciples abroad to convert the world. An Enthusiast, possessed with the high glory of propagating and establishing a new religion, to arise

and

and be denominated from himself, would have his spiritual passions kindled and inflamed to their utmost bearing, at that important moment of commencing his enterprise.

But the words of Jesus upon this occasion bespeak their Author to be perfectly cool, and collected within himself. *Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves.*

Let us reflect upon them with attention. Though I am not altogether of opinion with those who consider the premonition (to which the words of my text allude) so frequently repeated by Jesus to his followers, of the various persecution that awaited the profession of his Gospel, as the clearest evidence of his prophetic spirit: because I think a common observer of the state and genius of the then prevailing superstitions might easily foresee what would be the early fate of a Religion supported by no other powers than those of Reason and Grace, when it openly opposed its truth and purity to a world sunk deep in error and corruption. Yet so far must always be confessed, that this serious attention to the event would not have made part of the Character of a heated and inflamed Enthusiast. When we find, therefore, the Founder of our holy religion calmly attentive to the reception his Doctrine was likely to meet with from the People, and provident of the treatment his Servants were sure to receive from the Magistrate, we must needs conclude that he then possessed himself in that dignity of repose, under a comprehensive view of his scheme, which

became a great Prophet, superior to all the infirmities as well as chances of humanity.

But his provison for his faithful servants did not stop at the salutary warning here given unto them. When he had hinted at the treatment of the world towards them, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves*, he directs what should be their conduct to the world; *Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* A direction which none under the influence of a fanatic spirit would be either forward to give, or fond to see observed. For religious Enthusiasm, as we know by sad experience, places its chief glory in despising human prudence, and in violating and trampling upon human peace.

Its two great states or stages are the SUFFERINGS and the TRIUMPHS of its deluded Instruments. And, in both, this hot and fiery spirit fatally hurries them into the most mischievous extremes.

At the new birth of a visionary Sect, which is generally the suffering state of Enthusiasm, those under its influence are apt to give great advantages to their opposers, and to bring as great discredit on themselves. And all for want of this *wisdom of the serpent*; for want of using these means of human prudence which both reason and nature urge and dictate to us, for the support of our opinions, and for the preservation of our persons.

The method Enthusiasm chuses to employ in propagating its tenets is the reverse to this *wisdom of the serpent*; as we may see by comparing the practice of modern Enthusiasts with that of the great Apostle

Apostle of the Gentiles; who had formed his conduct on this monition of his Master. *He became all things to men, that he might gain some* *: They comply in nothing, through a visionary fervour to gain all. St. Paul, with this allegoric picture of *wisdom* before his eyes, was polite, artful, and insinuating; always on the watch, to take honest advantages of every principle and practice of his adversaries; in order the more effectually to recommend the Gospel of Jesus to their favour †. The Fanatic is stubborn, rude, positive, and overbearing. So far from being disposed to turn the best side of his adversaries' wrong opinions forward, the better to set off his own, that he is ever prompt to misrepresent their right ones: and abhors the temptation of suffering you to be of his Faith; unless you express it in his own words, and allow him all his consequences. And mistaking the precept of *being at enmity with the world* for an aversion to men as well as principles, he helps forward an unjust persecution from the public, when he should be reconciling particulars to his pretended mission.

Nor is his conduct less extravagant now it concerns the care of his person, than before, in the recommendation of his opinions. Part of the *wisdom of the serpent* consists, as Jesus elsewhere explains it, in prudently evading the fury of our enemies; so that when they persecute us in one city, we may fly to another ‡; a point of prudence, which St. Paul, on many occasions, as temperately as successfully

* 1 Cor. ix. 22. † Acts xvii. ‡ Matt. x. 23.

put in practice*. And when the same prudence directed him to withstand the Magistrate's Fasces, it was not as a Teacher of truth, but as a Citizen of Rome †. But neither precept nor example is sufficient to moderate the fervors of fanatic zeal. So that having stirred up the people to mischief, and provoked the magistrate to injustice, he closeth the scene, without either the Confessor's merit, or his Master's passport, in rushing with presumptuous confidence on the flames.

This then being the native hue and complexion of powerless Enthusiasm, Is it possible to believe, that He who, in the direction of being *wise as serpents*, discredited and condemned all this extravagance of conduct, could himself be an impotent Enthusiast?

But let us next see the visage Enthusiasm puts on when it is now become triumphant, and has gotten the People in its train. If, in its suffering state, it haply wore the face of patience and forbearance, it now shews, by the sudden change of countenance, that it esteemed them the virtues rather of the time than of the person. For when Power hath changed hands, and the magistrate is come over to its side, it is ever ready to turn the same authority against others which had been so abusively employed against itself. And if haply it contents itself to stay the slower issue of the more artful and clandestine methods of discouragement

* Acts ix. 25. xiv. 6. xvii. 10. xxiii. 17. xxv. 11.
† Ibid, xvi. 37. xxii. 25.

and

and wholesome severities, yet if these do not succeed against differing opinions, it falls with the quicker appetite on the more direct and open measures of violence and oppression.

Now the unbeliever will be forced to own, that Jesus, with only the common provision which a great genius can never be without, might fairly foresee, that a Religion so pure, so reasonable, so useful to mankind, against which there was nothing to oppose but the absurdities and mischiefs of Paganism, must, by the use of common prudence in the propagation of it, notwithstanding the opposition which was as easily foreseen, at length become superior and triumphant. So that an Enthusiast, who had left instructions how his Ministers should act when that time came, would naturally direct them to exert all their zeal; to demolish the high places, to cut down the groves, to slay the false prophets with the sword, and to establish a perfect uniformity. For there is nothing in which the fanatic spirit so delights to riot as in the abusive application of the rules and principles of one of God's dispensations to another, though of a genius directly opposite.

On the other hand, our ever-blessed Master, who not only foresaw, but predicted the progress and superiority of his Gospel, restrains his ministers from all ambitious politics, and unjust violence, in the single precept of *being harmless as doves*. For while they observed this rule, and preserved this character, they could never aim at usurping on the

State, or tyrannizing in the Church: But would leave the Magistrate his sword; would leave the People their conscience; and be content to remit the religious fate of Kingdoms to the wise providence of God; who in his own good time will bring all men to the knowledge of his Truth.

Thus hath the holy Founder of our Faith digged up, by the very roots, the whole system of Imposture. He hath quelled the wildness of the Fanatic in the command to be *wise as serpents*; he hath checked the ambition of the Enthusiast in the command to be *harmless as doves*: so that the unbeliever must either acquit him of these affections, or must retract what he seemed so willing to allow him, the greatness of his talents and abilities. For, if we will credit these men, The great support of his Character was a well-directed enthusiasm: and yet he effectually contrived to damp its influence at that very crisis when an Enthusiast would have let loose his genius, and given it the utmost force and moment.

It is seen, that in this account of a well-directed Enthusiasm, I have supposed it to consist of an equal mixture of EXTRAVAGANCE and ART: the first betraying itself in the struggle, and the last in its application of the fruits of victory. And whatever inconsistence there may appear to be in this representation, I apprehend the fault lies only in the contradictions of our corrupt nature.

It is commonly indeed supposed, that the more wild and extravagant a fanatic temper is, the more

clear it must needs be of all fraud and artifice: But both reason and experience are ready to shew us our mistake.

Fanaticism is a fire, which heats the mind indeed, but heats without *purifying*. It stimulates and ferments all the passions; but it rectifies none of them: and thus leaving the appetites unsubdued; pride, vanity, and ambition, insinuate themselves into the impotent and disordered mind, under the disguise of purity, holiness, and perfection. And while they are at work, Religion, which lent them these more honest appellations, will be so far from curbing the owner in the use of oblique means, that the strongest influence of fanaticism will be naturally directed to push him upon them, as the best instruments for the ready introduction of what he calls the *truth*.

Nor does the PHYSICAL state of the Enthusiast's mind give any stronger check to fraudulent practice than the MORAL. For when this passion or affection hath taken possession of a great genius, who, if he chance to have a lively imagination, is as subject to its controul as the meanest, the violence of his fervours makes him impatient of stop or defeat, in what he takes to be the *cause of God*; and consequently, to cast about for any kind of means to remove or repair it: readily persuading himself, that any means are lawful: And his superior genius will enable him to find them; and when found to improve them to their utmost use, by all the arts of fraudulent address. Hence, if we examine the history of mankind, we shall see, that the Founders of empires and false

religions, which these Artists contrived should support one another, were frank Enthusiasts: But, at the same time, sufficient masters of themselves, to turn, with proper address, that spirit which they had catched and communicated, to the advancement of their proper schemes. And it is observable, that wherever one of these personated actors was not perfect in both his parts, he was soon hissed off the stage. The reason is evident: it arises from the nature of things. Without Enthusiasm, the adventurer could never kindle that fire in his followers, which is so necessary to consolidate their mutual interests: for no one can heartily deceive numbers, who is not first of all deceived himself; or, in other words, seem to be in earnest. But then, on the contrary, when the spirit of fanaticism is sufficiently spread and inflamed, it can never produce any great or notable issue, unless the raiser and director of the machine be so far master of himself as to be able to turn the point of this powerful instrument to the objects of his project, and keep it constantly directed to their advancement.

Indeed (as hath been observed above) the successful Directors of this Drama have generally exhibited more of art in their latter scenes, and more of enthusiasm in the former. The reason of which too is not less evident. Fanaticism is a kind of ebullition or critical ferment of the infected mind: which a vigorous nature can work through, and by slow degrees be able to cast off. Hence, history informs us of several successful Impostors who set out in all the blaze of fanaticism, and ended their

their career in all the depth and stillness of Politics. A prodigy in our nature; but not the rarest; and exhibited with superior splendor by the famous Ignatius Loiola. This illustrious person, who verified the observation of one that almost equalled him in his trade, "that a man never rises so high as when he does not know whither he is going," began his ecstasies in the mire; and yet ended with the direction and execution of Councils, that even in his own life-time began to give the Law to Christendom.

Amidst all these distractions of human reason and obliquities of worldly politics, we see a spiritual Empire suddenly arise; we mark its progress; we trace its extent; we examine its establishment; and comparing all its parts with their reference to a whole, we find it in effect to have, what was fancied of old Rome, every essential character of eternity. Yet was this surprizing Revolution brought about by means entirely different from those by which all the great changes and establishments amongst mankind have been introduced, I mean FRAUD and FANATICISM. What, then, are we to conclude, but that the Religion of Jesus is as divine in its origine as it is pure and perfect in its essence: and that its Author was as free from all the visions and obliquities of Enthusiasm as he was replete with all the wisdom and virtue of Heaven?

# SERMON VII.

## THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE MESSENGERS OF THE GOSPEL.

MATT. v. 16.

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

OUR Blessed Saviour, as we may collect from the foregoing chapter, had delivered to his Followers the great Principles of the Gospel Dispensation; which consist in a clearer knowledge of the true God; the lost and forfeited condition of man; and restoration to life and immortality by faith in the Messiah.

Having thus taught them what they were to believe, he proceeds in this, and the following chapter, to shew them what they were to practise; introducing his *Sermon on the Mount* with the words of my text, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* As much as to say, The use you are to make of your superior knowledge is to compleat and recommend your practice; that, from thence

may

may arise, what is the legitimate end of all human actions, *Glory to God.*

This is the general sense of the words. But the equity, the importance, the necessity of the precept, do well deserve a more particular illustration.

It consists of three distinct parts.

The first is contained in the more general direction of *Letting our Light shine before men.* By *light* is meant *knowledge*, or the participation of *truth*; and not, as it is commonly understood, *good works.* And this appears not only from what hath been just observed of the disposition of the precept, with regard to what precedes and follows it; but likewise from the propriety of the words themselves, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works*; for the thing seen, and the instrument of seeing, must needs be different. Not to speak of the propriety of the figure, in the word *light* for *knowledge.* For what light is to the eye, that knowledge is to the mind: On which account it is become a metaphor running through all languages, but hath a peculiar grace and energy in the application of my text: The Great Author of our faith being described by the inspired men of old under the same figure, *That there should come a* STAR *out of Jacob*: wherefore St. John gives him the title of the LIGHT *which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

By this *light's shining before men* is meant, that it should be diffusive to all, as the nature of light is in itself, which sends out its rays on every side around; and

and that it should be communicated to all, as light is in its use and application amongst men; for as Jesus says in the words preceding my text, *Neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick.*

But rightly to apprehend the reason of giving an express precept for the doing what appears so natural for his followers to do, and so reasonable that they should do, we must consider the state and condition of Truth at the publication of the Gospel; where we shall find that the societies of the wise and learned, in the schools of the philosophers and in the colleges of the priests (from whence issued the voluntary and appointed instructors of the world), had imbibed, from one another, very inveterate prejudices concerning the communication of truth to the people.

In their sacred fraternities, partly to hide the weakness of the national religion, and partly to preserve the veneration for, and to increase the gain of the priesthood, every thing was wrapt about with mystery, and shut up within the cloisters of their temples. The books that contained the doctrine and discipline of religion were carefully sequestered from common eyes, and the inquisitive tempers of the vulgar restrained and checked by oracular denunciations against prophane curiosity.

The same incommunicable spirit prevailed in the schools of the Philosophers. These despised the people as much as the Priests imposed upon them; and shaking off their common relation to the gross body of mankind, they soon began to think, that the doctrines

doctrines and speculations of their schools were of a nature too excellent to come into the markets and assemblies of the Vulgar. Hence their solemn engagements of secresy; by which they kept their knowledge confined within the limits of their own sect or profession. Thus stood the *Pagan* world with respect to Truth.

Amongst the *Jews*, That great body called the Pharisees, which had all the learning and power of the Sanhedrim in their hands, had likewise, in imitation of the Gentile colleges of Religion and Learning, formed themselves into a Sect; and as they had borrowed many Pagan practices and opinions, which had miserably polluted the Law of Moses, so this, amongst the rest, of confining Wisdom to the walls of the temple; and *taking away the key of knowledge from their brethren* *.

Such being the perverse state of things, it was no wonder that Jesus should deem it of high importance to the interests of Truth, to caution his followers against a prejudice that had so universally infected all the teachers of Philosophy and Religion.

But there are still further reasons to inforce this precept: The christian faith hath its advantages of *shining*, and the Teachers of it their obligations to *light it up*, which are no where else to be found amongst all the various systems of wisdom or holiness.

For, 1. The Religion of Jesus is fit for, and

* Luke xi. 52.

worthy

worthy the knowledge and examination of every man. The several modes of Pagan worship, as they composed the national religions, were contrived and framed by Lawgivers, in ways that best served the ends of their several societies; so that public service, rather than truth, being the object of their institutions, these were but badly fitted for popular examination: which, therefore, in consequence, was forbid. But Jesus, who had no oblique ends to serve, *his kingdom not being of this world*, delivered only pure and exact truth, which will stand the severest test, and most critical inquiry: And This, which was so fit, was, at the same time, most necessary to be communicated to all, as propounding to mankind, *The terms of salvation* to be obtained only by *his* Gospel. Unlike, in this too, to the wisdom of the ancient Sages, which comprised only idle and fruitless truths, with which the people had no concern; or abstract and obscure speculations, with which they had no acquaintance.

*Secondly*, The Teachers of this Religion had the highest obligations freely to communicate of their knowledge to others. The pretence, on which the ancient masters of wisdom justified themselves in a contrary practice, was the cost and labour they had been at in acquiring knowledge. A long and studious application to letters, in the painful probationary trials of their schools; The many and dangerous voyages they had undertaken in search of wisdom, at their great expence of fortune, ease, and health: These gave them, as they thought, an exclusive property in the Truths which they had so dearly bought,

and

and so often paid for. Whereas the followers of Jesus had all their divine wisdom brought home unto them, without cost or search. Hence it is that their Master elsewhere tells them, *Freely you have received; freely give* *. That is, you can have no pretence to conceal, or sell, the Knowledge, which was given to you without search or price.

II. But it was not enough for this *light to shine before men*; it was not enough for the followers of Jesus to communicate of their saving knowledge to others: it was So to shine, that the world might see and understand the virtues of its enlighteners. And this is the second particular of the precept. *Let your light* so *shine before men, that they may see your good works.* And as before, the PROPERTY of light was alluded to, in the command that it *should shine*; so here, the USE, that it *should so shine.* For light is not held forth for the manifestation of itself; but to illustrate something else, which men would recommend to public notice.

It is here supposed, you see, that the DOCTRINES of Christianity will lend a *light* to *good works,* whereby they may be better seen and understood. And this with great reason. There are two ways of estimating moral actions; either by the merit of the Performer, or by the benefit of the Effects. If by the benefit of their effects, there is no need of knowing the motive of the actor; on which all merit must be estimated. In such case, we only praise the action for the good it

* Matt. x. 8.

pro-

produceth: or if the actor have any share in the applause; as his motives may, for aught we know, be only prepossession, habit, or gentleness of temper; it is but just such commendation as we give to animals undegenerate, and displaying the good qualities of their respective species. But when we would estimate *good works* by the merit of the Performer, which is the case in question, we are then to know his motives of action. These arise out of his principles; and are more or less noble as those principles are more or less legitimate. Now as the principles, or *light*, of true religion produce the noblest motives for *good works*, which are love of God and universal benevolence towards man; with great reason does the holy Jesus suppose, that this *light* will add the highest lustre to CHRISTIAN MORALS; and make them, as he well expresses it, *seen*; that is, seen in their full light and splendor.

By this branch of the precept, again, it was our Master's purpose to discriminate his followers from the Pagan priesthood; who neither practised virtue themselves, nor taught it as of much avail to the people. If they were but frequent in their temple service, and exact in their ritual solemnities, these false guides assured them that the gods were pleased, and they had done their duty.

It was much the same with the Jewish. The love of God and of their neighbour was forgotten, or *made of none effect*, as our Lord tells them, *through their traditions* *; and nothing found to supply their place, but *new Moons and Sabbaths, fasts and*

* Mark vii. 13.

*solemn assemblies* *; which had so thoroughly usurped the place of Virtue, as, in time, even to dispute the very name with it.

III. But we have not yet the full sense of my text. It was not enough that the *light* of Jesus's followers *shone before men*, and that their *good works* were *seen* by it: They were to be SUCH *good works* as from whence *glory to God* might result. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* And this is the third and last particular of the precept.

It would be the highest folly and arrogance, in the reptile, man, to imagine that he, by any of his endeavours, could add to the *glory of God*, with whom essentially dwells all power and perfection for evermore. But though the pomp of ceremonies, the servility of prostrations, the cost of sacrifices, and the dedication of sumptuous temples, can add nothing to his *glory*; yet is he graciously pleased, so long as we continue subject to his Son, and obedient to his laws, to reckon our procuring and advancing our own mutual happiness, by the exercise of *good works*, as the augmentation of his proper *glory*.

But it is not only in the *end*, but in the *means*, of procuring human happiness, that our holy religion hath advantages peculiar to itself, for the promotion of *God's glory*. We are taught by this religion, that, of ourselves, and without the assistance of Heaven, we can do *no good work*, for that it is the

* Isaiah i. 13.

Holy

Holy Spirit who directs us *both to will and to do of his own good pleasure**. God therefore being the immediate giver of this *grace*, all that proceeds from it must be placed to his account, and to the augmentation of his *glory*.

Here again will the followers of Jesus be distinguished from all other teachers. The Pagan and Jewish priesthood were, indeed, by their very profession, taught, that the *glory* of the Deity was to be their aim. For religion being their employment, and the object of religion, God; they could not but see that his *glory* was principally to be regarded. But in the way of doing it they were both equally mistaken. They placed this *glory*, as we observed before, only in the magnificence of their temples, the train of their processions, the awfulness of sacrifice, and the humiliation of expiatory penances. They never suspected that *peace, good-will towards men*, advanced *glory to God in the highest*.

The Philosophers were still more in the dark as to this matter. For though, in one point, they saw clearer than the priests, that Virtue was infinitely preferable to the pomp of solemnest sacrifice; yet, in cultivating the duties of morality, they were so far from thinking of the *glory of God*, that they refined and sublimated VIRTUE for no other purpose than to advance the *glory of man*. Nor could it well be otherwise amongst men, who were ignorant both of the true ground of moral obligation, and of our natural inability to act upon it: from which two principles, rightly derived, *glory to God* most

* Philip. ii. 13.

eminently results. For, first, their motives to the practice of virtue were absurd and illegitimate. One followed it *for the love of fame and reputation*; another, *for the intrinsic beauty of its nature*; a third, *for the benefit of its effects*; a fourth, *for that the laws of his country required it*; a fifth, *for he knew not why:* But none practised it on its true principle, *conformity to the will of God:* from whence *glory* to him naturally proceeds. Again. They were as much mistaken in man's ability. They pretended that their SAGE had the whole exercise of virtue in his power, by the mere force and rectitude of his own nature, without any aid or assistance from the Deity. Nay, the *Stoics*, a sect which, of all others, most cultivated the science and practice of morality, were so far from seeking the assistance of Heaven, that, with an unparalleled extravagance, they placed their WISE MAN in a rank superior to their GODS, as having in him something of higher strength and fortitude; for that he persevered in virtue, amidst a thousand difficulties and discouragements; whereas the virtue of the Gods had no temptations to shake it *. In a word, such utter strangers were they, in general, both to the nature of God and Man, that Cicero, delivering the sentiments of ancient wisdom on this matter, expresses himself to this effect: "All the commodities of life, says

* Est aliquid, quo SAPIENS antecedat Deum. Ille naturæ beneficio, non suo sapiens est. Sen. Ep. liii.—Ferte fortiter, hoc est quo Deum antecedatis. Ille extra patientiam malorum est, vos [Sapientes] supra patientiam. Idem Lib. Quare bonis, etc.

"he,

" he, are the gift of Heaven, but virtue no man " ever yet thought came from God. For, who ever " returned him thanks, that he was good and " honest? And why should he? for virtue is, of " right, our own praise, and that in which man " reasonably GLORIES. This, in short, is the opinion " of all the world, that the goods of Fortune are to " be asked of Heaven, but that wisdom is to be " had only from ourselves *."

But now it will be said, and it is not an objection to be concealed, How is this precept to the Disciple, to be accommodated to the Master's practice? Jesus directs the Messengers of his word to *let their light shine before men:* and yet his own was so obscurely dispensed, that his followers are ever and anon soliciting him to explain his meaning. And his

* The whole passage is in these words: Atque hoc quidem omnes mortales sic habent, externas commoditates, vineta, segetes, oliveta, ubertatem frugum et fructuum, omnem denique commoditatem prosperitatemque vitæ, à Diis se habere: virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit. Nimirum rectè. Propter virtutem enim jure *laudamur*, et IN VIRTUTE RECTE GLORIAMUR. Quod NONcontingeret, si id DONUM A DEO, non à nobis haberemus. At verò aut honoribus aucti, aut re familiari, aut si aliud quippiam nacti sumus fortuiti boni, aut depulimus mali, cùm Diis gratias agimus, tum nihil nostræ laudi assumtum arbitramur. Num quis, quòd bonus vir esset, gratias Diis egit unquam? At quòd dives, quòd honoratus, quòd incolumis——Ad rem autem ut redeam, judicium hoc omnium mortalium est, fortunam à Deo petendam, à SEIPSO sumendam esse SAPIENTIAM. De Nat. Deor. l. iii. c. 36.

answer to them, upon one of these occasions, only increases the embarras. *Unto you* (says he) *it is given to know the Mystery of the Kingdom of God, but, unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their Sins should be forgiven them**. A penurious dispensation of truth is the least offensive circumstance in this dreadful account of his commission. The keeping numbers in darkness, in order to work their destruction, gives but an untoward idea of a divine Messenger; and a much worse of him in particular who, by his own declaration, was sent *not to destroy men's lives but to save them*†, or, as he expresses it on an occasion more to our present purpose, *to save that which was lost* ‡.

I shall examine this offensive circumstance in the Gospel dispensation, not merely to shew the conformity between Jesus's own practice, and that which in my text he recommends to his followers; but principally to vindicate the justice of the divine conduct towards those, who, it is confessed, were the proper objects of his vengeance. And the rather, as this circumstance is become a stumbling-block, which licentious men are ever ready to throw in the way of the staggering and the weak-sighted.

In order to do this, we must go back to the institution of the Law. This establishment, though preparatory to the Gospel, was yet, in order to fit

* Mark iv. 11, 12. † Luke ix. 56.
‡ Matt. xviii. 11.

it

it to the genius of the Jewish people, delivered under a carnal cover; which, for the sake of *what was to come,* the Prophets, from time to time, were ever lifting up; and pointing to the spiritual substance beneath. Notwithstanding this attention of Providence to conduct them to their true happiness, the genius of the people prevailed; and instead of suffering the SUBJECT disclosed by the prophets to erect their minds to heavenly things, They catched at the EXPRESSION to fortify themselves in their carnal habitudes. In a word, The Jews growing more and more earthly-minded; and with an obstinacy so peculiar to them, that their blindness seemed to spread in proportion to their increase of day-light; By such time as the change of the economy approached, any cover for truth, even the plainest apologue, or most obvious parable, was sufficient to keep them in that ignorance, into which their passions and prejudices had brought them.

Against this hardness of heart and grossness of understanding, the prophets had long struggled, by all the address of information, by all severity of reproof; till at length, every mean of reformation having proved ineffectual, God, in his wise providence thought fit, that those who would not suffer him to save them should, for a warning to an impious world, have their rejection of the Lord of life predicted by the mouth of his Prophets; and their final destruction recorded in their own Oracles.

The time foretold was now come. The Lord of life was sent to THEM and to all MANKIND. And agreeable to his business, was his Office and Cha-

racter. To mankind at large he was primarily a divine Messenger: To the Jews, a divine Messenger foretold. To prove his mission, he worked miracles: to prove himself the Messiah, he fulfilled Prophecies. Under the first part of his Character, *his light shone before men* in the manner he recommends it to his followers' imitation: under the latter, it *shone* indeed, but so as to be subservient and instrumental to the evidence arising from the marks predicted of their promised Deliverer. Now God, by Isaiah, had said, "Also I heard the voice of "the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who "will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. "And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye "indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, "but perceive not. Make the heart of this people "fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their "eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear "with their ears, and understand with their heart, "and convert and be healed*." From this prophecy, (which the Disciples might have seen was then fulfilling on the Jews †, in the very mode of communicating the Gospel to them) our blessed Saviour deduceth the proof of his Messiah-Character—*Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand* ‡. As much as to say, Take this mark amongst others of the truth of my pretensions: My offers of Salvation, as was foretold,

* Isaiah vi. 8, 9, 10. † Matt. xiii. 14. John xii. 39.
‡ Luke viii. 10.

are

are rejected of my Countrymen; and I have delivered my message to them in such terms, and attended with such circumstances, as the good providence of God hath foretold; and by foretelling, hath prescribed the Messiah to employ, in order to promote the accomplishment of his will. So that Jesus, we see, is not here declaring the MODE, in which, as a divine messenger, he was to propound God's good will to man: Much less is it any intimation of the peculiar GENIUS of the Gospel; which in one place selected its favourites, and in another doomed the unhappy to perdition: But it is a simple assertion that the prophetic prediction, or, if you will, God's sentence, was now fulfilling or executing on the Jews: And that Jesus, as the instrument of its completion, was indeed the Messiah foretold. In a word, he is here simply instructing his followers in the wise and wonderful accomplishment of Scripture prophecy, concerning the fate of the Jews and the fortunes of their Messiah; to convince them of God's righteous dealings, and of the truth of his own mission. Let what consequence soever therefore, concerning the divine justice, be drawn from this declaration, it concerns not Jesus, as preacher of the Gospel; but God himself as the giver of the Law.

We address ourselves then, with due reverence, to justify his ways to man; which we trust may be done without presumption or difficulty, where Revelation informs us of the act; and Natural light instructs us in the equity and reason of it.—"Also

"I heard

" I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall
" I send and who will go for us? Then said I,
" Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and tell
" this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not;
" and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the
" heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy,
" and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes,
" and hear with their ears, and understand with
" their heart, and convert and be healed."

Here, we see, the event predicted, is the rejection of the Messiah: and though we find it so predicted as may seem to imply it was likewise influenced, *lest they see with their eyes*, yet as we are able to give a good account why such terms might be used though no such influence were exerted, it does not follow that the event was indeed influenced.

First then, we may observe, that, had it been the intent of the Holy Spirit to impress upon the hearer no more than the CERTAINTY of the event, we cannot conceive how this idea could have been conveyed more naturally and elegantly than by words which imply an INFLUENCE, *make the heart of this people fat, &c.* For the human mind being unable to reconcile free-will and prescience, it can hardly be brought to consider a future event as any other than a contingency, till the idea of a superior influence be taken in.

Secondly, where the matter revealed concerns God's MORAL GOVERNMENT, the subject seems to require,

require, that the natural effects of vice should be represented as positive inflictions, as judicial punishment for crimes. Philosophically speaking, A hardness of heart, in the course of things, brought on this fatal blindness: But, prophetically, The blindness is a Punishment for their hardness of heart; *to them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, etc.*

The subject, I say, seems to require this representation; men being but too apt to consider the natural issue of things, as out of the bounds of moral government; though in reality it make a very essential part: for what such men call the ETERNAL RELATIONS are indeed no other than a a DISPOSITION, of God's free appointment; and therefore whatever evil results from such disposition, may in a moral sense be truly and properly considered as a positive infliction.

And I am the rather inclined to believe that the prophecy in question is to be understood in this sense, when I consider the conduct both of Jesus and his apostles to this abandoned people. The first offer of the Gospel is made to them: and it is not till their rejection of it, that Jesus turns to the Gentiles. He took care that his followers should observe the same conduct. And no reasonable account, I think, but this, can be given of his suffering them to remain so long under the delusion of that gross prejudice, that the offer and benefits of the Gospel were confined to the race of Abraham. For the consequence of this was their being strongly driven to try

try all methods with a people to whom their commission was supposed both to begin and end. They were so driven; and did not leave Judea till forced away by persecution: and then, the same prejudice turned them, first of all, to the *dispersed amongst the Gentiles**.

But let us now suppose this predicted blindness to be, what the objectors would have it, a positive infliction of evil. If ever there were punishments in mercy, this was certainly one of them. We see from their whole history, how morally impossible it was that they should be converted by any mere conviction. All their faculties were so totally possessed with ideas of a temporal deliverance, that they would have rejected a spiritual dominion even from the hand of God himself: as they had before rejected a glorious Theocracy under his own ineffable administration, for the sake of a fashionable Tyranny, like what their neighbours groaned under. Now, in so desperate a condition, the increase of light must have been the increase of condemnation. The greatest mercy therefore that could have been afforded them was to *make their heart fat, their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes.*

But he who will insist that the words, which follow—*lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed*—do necessarily imply a punishment in judgment, rather than in mercy, shall not be contended with by me: so little reason do I think we have to stand out, from the appre-

* John vii. 35.

hension

hension of its impinging on the moral attributes of God. Be it then a punishment in judgment.

To suppose no such for long slighted grace, is making the highest benefit the cheapest and the vilest: and if we suppose any, the most adequate seems to be the loss of that which had been long, and impiously abused.

To believe offered salvation to be always at hand, after much scornful rejection of it, is to divest God of his justice; and to leave him nothing to exercise over man but his mercy. But whenever the conclusions, which we draw concerning God's dispensations towards us, from one of his attributes, are made at the expence of another, we may be assured that they are false, because unreasonable.

Further, Every covenant of God with man, on the system of God's revealed will, is a covenant of grace or favour; Which therefore may be justly made (as in fact it is made) with this conditional punishment annexed and declared. And what fitter, in the nature of things, than that long and continued insults on the Giver should be punished by a total deprivation of the gift?

But lastly, this part of the great Dispensation seems, in some cases, to be necessary for the support and dignity of God's moral government. If God had nothing to do but to pardon, man would soon find nothing to do but to offend.

The two great sources of human infelicity are PRESUMPTION and PREJUDICES; and these we are

are apt to indulge in all the objects of our WILL and JUDGMENT: the consequence of which is, our so frequent miscarriages in the pursuits both of HAPPINESS and KNOWLEDGE.

One of the boldest instances of presumption is our so commonly neglecting the *calls of grace:* so that nothing less than this awful part of God's dispensation, the *shutting the door* on those who have long and vilely trifled with it, was sufficient to give a check to so impious a folly.

The impatience of labour, and the violence and allurements of the appetites, are the source of all our prejudices and wrong judgments: and while we continue to be misled by that master prejudice, the INNOCENCE OF ERROR, there is little reason to expect we should be disposed to bring our opinions to a strict account. But this awakening truth, of the punishment for abused mercy in taking away the means of information, will dispose us to give Religion as early and fair hearing; and make us sensible that Error is never innocent while the door of Truth stands open before us.

But the best proof of God's righteous dealing are the THINGS DONE: and it is only for want of full demonstration here, that we are forced to have recourse to any other: It being but to supply and support the lower degrees of evidence in the history of God's dispensation, that we reason upon the justice of them from the nature of things. In all cases where we have sensible demonstration of the fact, the reasoning, as is fit, goes the other way; and the justice of doing is proved from the thing done. Whether God could

could cast off his chosen nation, and keep or leave them in irremediable blindness, is to be proved, where the rejection rests only on moral evidence, from what we know of his nature and attributes. But where this punishment, whose commencement rests only on such evidence, is still executing before our eyes, in this case, the sensible demonstration of the fact is a better proof of the justice of it, than all that metaphysic reasoning can supply.

This we presume to be the real case of the Jewish people. Whenever this dreadful judgment of God, which fell upon them in a national destruction, had its beginning; whether at, or before their refusal of salvation from the Lord of life; so much at least is certain, that it still continues to operate with unremitted vigour. For, as in civil tribunals, which are wont, in the case of more atrocious criminals whose death but half satisfies the demands of justice, to doom the lifeless carcase to be gibetted up in terror, and exposed to the sight of the survivors, so it hath pleased eternal Justice to act, in its disposition of the remains of this unhappy nation. For though their civil and religious policies have been long overthrown and abolished, yet the Name survives, and the Race still exists, as distinct and separate, and perhaps more unmixed than while they were a Nation. A dreadful distinction, and supported against a thousand circumstances which must, according to all our rules and experience of human affairs, have long since swallowed and absorbed them into the great and undistinguishable mass of mankind. The circumstances, I mean, are such as arise from their

their dispersion over the whole earth, without proper habitation, country, or national connexion. For a fixed abode, as the head-quarters of a powerless people, seems to be a kind of preservative against extinction; and as we are told (by those who would willingly lessen the miracle of this punishment) hath actually kept in being, the *Guebres* and the *Parsis* in some retired corners of India. And yet the TEN TRIBES, when doomed to the like destruction, found a fixed habitation; who nevertheless are absorbed and lost as if they had never been. Now, though the philosopher and politician will but badly account for this; the religionist can resolve it with ease. He says, that God Almighty had decreed and foretold that the first dispersion should absorb the name and memory of the people punished; and that the last should preserve and hold them up, the visible objects of his present vengeance, and of his future mercy.

But then, how are they held up? As the refuse of the earth, the outcast of nations, and the opprobrium of humanity; equally hated and detested by all the differing religions and various policies of mankind. For, in order to convey down the justice of the sentence, along with the execution, (so wonderful are the ways of God) the VICE of this abandoned people continues to this day, as inseparable from their persons, as the punishment it produced upon their race. And avarice, fraud, and a savage inhumanity, like an incurable leprosy, as effectually distinguish their obduracy from the shifting follies of mankind, as does the adherence to their rabbinical superstitions.

To

To resume then, and to conclude with the main question, which led us into this inquiry, The consistency between the openness and evidence recommended by Jesus to his followers; and the parables and dark speeches delivered by himself.

We presume, it now appears, that there is a perfect harmony and agreement between the precept and the example: that the first is declarative of the essential genius of the Gospel; the second only an occasional appeal to the evidence of Jesus's Messiah-character: and consequently, which is the inference to be drawn from both, that throughout the course of Christ's ministry, every thing, as well what was kept back from some, as what was clearly and fully revealed to others, equally tended to the advancement of God's GLORY, and the GOOD of mankind.

# SERMON VIII*.

## THE EDIFICATION OF GOSPEL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

2 PET. i. 5—7.

GIVING ALL DILIGENCE, ADD TO YOUR FAITH VIRTUE, AND TO VIRTUE KNOWLEDGE, AND TO KNOWLEDGE TEMPERANCE, AND TO TEMPERANCE PATIENCE, AND TO PATIENCE GODLINESS, AND TO GODLINESS BROTHERLY-KINDNESS, AND TO BROTHERLY-KINDNESS CHARITY.

THE holy Apostle beginning his farewel epistle to the Churches with a commendation of their FAITH, takes occasion from thence to instruct them in the nature of that CHRISTIAN EDIFICATION which they were to raise on it; and, as his last *labour of love*, brings together, and lays in, all the various materials proper for so great a work.

But we shall have a very wrong, and much too low, conception of our Apostle's skill, if we consider

* This Discourse was printed and published while the Rebel Army was in England, in the latter end of the year 1745.

these but as materials rudely thrown together without art or choice; and standing in need of other hands to range them in that architectonic order wherein they are to be employed. For on a careful survey of his plan it will be found, that no other than that Spirit which directed the workmen of the old tabernacle could give so artful a disposition to the materials of this new *building not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God* *.

He hath marked out the Foundation, he hath fixed the Basis, proportioned the Members, adorned the Superstructure, and crowned the Whole with the richest of materials. And all this with such justice of science, sublimity of thought, and force of genius, that every foregoing Virtue gives STABILITY to the following; and every following imparts PERFECTION to that which went before: Where the three Orders of this heavenly achitecture, the HUMAN, the DIVINE, and SOCIAL Virtues, are so masterly disposed, that the *human* and *social* have their proper strengths and graces heightened and supported by the common connexion of the *divine:* Where every thing, in short, concurs, in its proper station, *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of Christ* †.

In conformity to the Masters of Science, who deliver it to their disciples as a first principle, that no considerable advancement is to be expected without much pains and labour, our holy artist introduceth his rules with this preliminary precept,—GIVING ALL DILIGENCE. And if this be necessary

* 2 Cor. v. 1. Heb. xi. 10. † Eph. iv. 12.

in

in civil matters, where nothing opposeth the progress to perfection but *the length of art and shortness of life*; with how great reason are we here enjoined *diligence*, where, besides those discouragements, we have numerous enemies within us under the disguise of friends, the confederated Passions, to retard our progress; and devils, and evil men without, to stop us as we press forward in the career of virtue?

But the necessity of this *diligence* will be fully seen in the sequel of our discourse; where we explain the care and circumspectiom required in the cultivation of every Christian Virtue, here recommended, to prevent its languishing by defect, or luxuriating by excess.

St. PETER, *as a wise master-builder**, chuseth for his foundation that ROCK on which our Lord had promised him to *build the Church*;

*Add to your* FAITH——

as directed by the same divine Spirit with his fellow-labourer St. PAUL, who bids *every man take heed how he buildeth; for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is* JESUS CHRIST †.

But the simplicity and clearness of the doctrine of *Faith* could not secure it, even in the apostolic times, from being perverted to countenance the most fatal error concerning its nature and efficacy; while it was mistaken to be *alone* sufficient to make man acceptable to his Maker, and, *without good works*, to entitle him to the rewards of the Gospel-covenant. To explain the original causes of this error, and

* 1 Cor. iii. 10. † Id. ib. 11.

to shew how the perfect novelty of the doctrine of Faith—the illustrious marks of that Spirit, which then accompanied the profession of the Faith—and the method the Holy Spirit directed the Apostles to pursue in the propagation of the Gospel—to shew, I say, how all these accidentally contributed to support this error, is beside the bounds and purpose of the present discourse.

It shall suffice to observe, that this dangerous extravagance, which hath continued more or less, to infect all ages of the Christian Church, spread immediately so swift and wide, upon the wings of that divine truth, that a *man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law* *, that the apostolic writers found it necessary to give it a frequent and formal confutation. And on this account, St. Peter's first precept enjoins us to add or build *Virtue* upon *Faith*.

*Add to your Faith,* VIRTUE †.

From henceforth, *Faith*, which, while it was single and solitary, remained *dead*, as the sacred

* Rom. iii. 28.

† I understand the word ἀρετὴ, in this place, in its common acceptation as it is used by moral writers. But Grotius says, Vox ἀρετῆς non potest hic ita generaliter sumi ut Phil. iv. 8. & apud Philosophos. It is fit we hear his reason, that the reader may judge between us. Sequuntur enim multa virtutum nomina, quare ἀρετὴν hic recte puto posse accipi fortitudinem in fide. He owns—Est in hoc periodo egregia gradatio. I think I have shewn there is such a gradation; but its beauty and correctness depend on ἀρετὴ's being taken *generaliter, ut Phil.* iv. 8. *& apud Philosophos.*

writers

writers express it, being thus *clothed upon* by virtue, becomes alive and vigorous, and productive of all the fruits of grace and immortality.

A reciprocal advantage *Virtue*, thus erected, receives from *Faith*: for we shall find these advantages to be, all the way, reciprocal. The weakness of unguided Reason, and the violence of ill-balanced passions, had reduced MORAL VIRTUE, both in principle and practice, to so shadowy and precarious an existence, that the Wisest in the Pagan world could not forbear lamenting its helpless condition; and owning that nothing but a Revelation from Heaven could realize and support it.

They mistook the true foundation of Morality; Some placing it in the native excellence of virtue, others in the exterior benefits, of which it is productive. They were left destitute, and exposed to the free rage of ungoverned passions, without aid, and with uncertain prospect of reward.

But it was the *Dispensation of Faith*, which taught us that the true foundation of Morality was compliance to the will of our Creator and sovereign Lord. It was *Faith* which enabled us to surmount all the opposition of the appetites, by holding out to us an infinite reward; and which the assistance of the Holy Spirit hath placed within our reach. Thus, to use the words of the apostle Jude, *building up ourselves on our most holy* FAITH, *praying in the Holy Ghost, keeping ourselves in the love of God, we may look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life**.

* Ver. 20, 21.

But though *Virtue* be here enjoined, and in all the preaching of our blessed Saviour, and in all the writings of his Apostles, incessantly repeated and inforced; yet if we expect to find in them any regular or methodic body of Morality, we shall be much mistaken. With respect to this, the New Testament, all along, refers us to another Guide. For God having before revealed the whole doctrine of Morality by the RELIGION OF NATURE, and none of God's dispensations contradicting another, it was enough for the first teachers of Christianity, when they preached up *Virtue*, to refer their followers for particulars, to what Natural Religion taught concerning it.

This being so, and that the great Pandect of the LAW OF NATURE is to be searched and studied, in order to attain a perfect knowledge of moral duty, there is need of much pains and exercise of mind to learn that *Virtue* we are here enjoined to build upon *Faith*. For though Nature hath stamped so strongly the first principles of moral duty in the breasts of all men, that even a kind of friendly instinct will not suffer us to be totally ignorant of them; yet the numerous deductions from those first principles, of what is fit and right, in every circumstance of life, being to be collected by the setting together, comparing, and sorting our ideas, through all the various combinations of moral complexities, it requires, even with the assistance of Holy Writ, much reflection and habitude; and without that assistance, is a task utterly unsurmountable, as the experience of all ages hath fully shewn.

Scripture

Scripture then constantly referring to the Law of Nature, what can result from the study of Scripture, by one ignorant of that Law, but doubt and uncertainty, if modest; and if vain and presuming, and at the same time (which hath too often happened) a teacher of others by profession, what but mistakes and errors, the fatal errors of Superstition and Fanaticism? For doubtless to an ignorance of Natural Religion must be ascribed those extravagances to which so many Sects and Parties have, in their several turns, been obnoxious.

But much of this mischief had been avoided, had men duly attended to the words of our Apostle: who, with this design, gave us the next precept of my text. *Add*, says he,

*to Virtue*, KNOWLEDGE;

or that wisdom which is the result of the study of Nature in the pursuit of Truth.

I. And that you may see with how prophetic, as well as just, a spirit St. *Peter* was here directed, I shall stop a moment to hold you out a picture of *Virtue* unattended with that *Knowledge*; copied from no obscure or disgraced originals; but from such whose lives are preached up for examples, and their deaths commemorated with divine honours; such as have shrines and altars dedicated to their worship; and vows and petitions offered up to their divinity; in one word, POPISH SAINTS.

To understand this matter truly, We must consider, that *Virtue* consists in acting agreeably to those relations, in which we stand to our common Humanity,

Humanity, our Fellow-creatures, and our Creator. For as RELIGION, in the largest sense of the word, includes the duty we owe ourself and neighbour; so MORALITY, in its larger sense, includes the observance of that relation we stand in towards God. And when the practice respects man, it is called VIRTUE; when it respects God, it is PIETY.

These relations are commonly distinguished into the *human*, the *social*, and the *divine* virtues: The end and design of all which is to perfect man's nature;

1. By restraining, regulating, and directing, the private and selfish appetites, *according to the dictates of reason.*

2. By cultivating, improving, and enlarging the social passions and affections, and employing them in the service of our Species, *according to the dictates of charity.*

3. By exercising our understandings in the contemplation of the first Cause, and by owning our relation to him in suitable acts of rational worship, in order to unite us to our supreme Good, *according to the dictates of grace.*

Now when, in the Church of Rome, *Knowledge* came to be esteemed of no use to improve or direct *Virtue*; but that *Ignorance* was thought as well the mother of all other virtues, as *of Devotion:* When the *Law of Nature* came to be shunned as a dangerous and fallacious guide; and *Faith*, traditional, not scriptural, had usurped its province of interpreting *Gospel-righteousness*; then it was, that

these bright examples of a new kind of virtue appeared amongst them, in a barbarous rabble of Saints; who under the common name of RELIGIOUS, and on pretence of a more sublime and elevated virtue, than natural Religion taught, ran into the most horrid excesses of Fanaticism and Superstition. For,

1. Instead of REGULATING the selfish appetites, they laboured all they could to eradicate and destroy them, as things, even in their nature, vicious; as the graceless furniture of *the old man with his affections and lusts.* All was dismal and dark about them: inordinate watchings, excruciating disciplines, attenuating labours: these miseries, still further aggravated by hunger, thirst, and nakedness, were the best means these poor mistaken followers of *Him,* who said *his yoke was easy and his burthen light,* could think of to regulate the selfish passions. Till the body, deprived of every kind of good, which the gracious hand of Providence hath so largely poured out for the solace of its creatures, gave way, and yielded to the fury of this fanatic penitence: While he was esteemed the greatest *Saint* who was the most expeditious *Suicide.*

2. Instead of improving and ENLARGING the social affections, these Saints fled into caves and deserts, or shut themselves up for life in the dust and silence of a cloister. Where, to unfit themselves for serving their friends and families, they renounced their possessions, to give to *pious uses;* that is, to support the sloth of lazy Mendicants, or the luxury of

of debauched Churchmen: To unfit themselves for submission to the Civil magistrate, they entered into treasonable engagements of unlimited obedience to their spiritual superiors: To unfit themselves for serving their country or mankind, they took vows of voluntary poverty, and renounced all secular employments: And lastly, as much as in them lay, to make war against their very Species, they unnaturally devoted themselves to a single life, in blasphemous opposition to that first great command and blessing, *increase and multiply.*

3. Lastly, instead of USING REASON in the offices of devotion, to attain the supreme Good, an union with the Deity; By crediting the *Imagination*, they have often thrown themselves, with ecstatic transports, into the arms of the Demon. While, in the place of internal acts of sober meditation, nothing was seen but visionary raptures, and transfigurations; nothing heard but predictions, prophecies, and revelations: In the place of external acts of rational worship, they celebrated the holy offices with gay and childish ornaments, with barbarous and superstitious rites, and with base and servile prostrations. And the favourite objects of their worship were in all respects agreeable to the form; either the idolatrous adoration of a consecrated wafer, or of those yet less substantial divinities, which have their existence only in a lying legend.

You have here a faithful picture of Popish *Virtue* stript of *Knowledge*. From whence you may collect how miserable a creature man grows, when he throws aside

aside his *Reason*, the first kind gift of Heaven, in order to follow the false lights, which custom, fancy, or the passions, have stuck up in his breast; and how equally miserable that Society must be, which supports a Religion, where IGNORANCE hath divested *Virtue* of all its charms, poisoned all its health, and made it as destructive to Communities, as barefaced open vice.

Here, you have been shewn, in a terrible example, the mischief done by *Ignorance* to *Virtue*; of how much service *Knowledge* is to it, you may collect for yourselves.

I now proceed to shew the reciprocal service *Virtue* does to *Knowledge*. *Knowledge* is the perception and attainment of TRUTH; and *useful Knowledge* the perception and attainment of those truths, which tend to the perfecting of our nature. But the carnal passions, operating aversely to such truths, cloud and darken the understanding, so as to mislead us even in those of the most easy discovery, and of the highest importance. Again, to acquire a competent share of *Knowledge*, we must, as I have said, *give all diligence* in the pursuit of truth, so as to trace her throughout her hidden recesses: But it is only a love for the object, which can heartily engage us in the pursuit: And this can arise from nothing but the beauty of it. Now while *Vice* usurps the heart, *Truth*, her mortal enemy, will be a neglected Guest. But when *Virtue* has assumed her seat, the passion for Truth will revive. For *Truth* and *Virtue* are twin-born sisters; and, with only a name

name of distinction, participate of one common nature; *Truth* being speculative *Virtue*, and *Virtue* only practical *Truth*. And now the understanding makes a free progress in knowledge, as having no headstrong appetites to mislead it, nor earthly passions to damp its affection.

From henceforth, the only danger is from the quarter opposite: Lest the mind's ardent love of truth should engage it in abstractions; and carry it beyond the limits of those truths, which are given us for our contemplation here.

In order to apprehend this danger, we are to understand, that, of the immense intellectual system, an extremely small portion only lies really within our reach; the infinitely larger part residing near the source of Light itself; whose effulgence becomes darkness to the dazzled view of the impotent Intruder.

The reason why so much is kept out of sight, and set above the reach of man's comprehension, who by the unwearied vigour of his faculties seems naturally capable of a much wider grasp, appears to be this, Lest, in our earthly condition, the mind should become distracted by too great variety of ideas; or that it should make a wrong choice; and pursue truths of less present importance too far, to the neglect of those more necessary for its improvement, in this our probationary condition.

This reason is much supported by observing, that in the enlightened part of the intellectual world, nay even in those clearest and brightest portions of it, where

where full science is to be had, speculations, pushed beyond a certain point (that point where Use is reasonably supposed to end, and mere Curio-ity to begin) bring our conclusions to obscurity, extravagance, and contradiction.

The not attending to this seems to have been the very thing, which hath given birth, and so long continuance, to SCEPTICISM. For men seeing this to be the issue of the clearest principles, when pursued to an intemperate length, concluded, against their senses, that what ended in darkness had never really begun in light. Reason indeed convinced them that so perverse a progress was not the NATURAL CONDITION of things; but they would not suffer experience to teach them, that it was the ARBITRARY DECREE of infinite wisdom and mercy, which imposed this barrier to the extravagances of its giddy, lawless creature.

But however this may be, certain it is, that men, raised and heated by an over-fond passion for knowledge, have been always apt to run into the boundless regions of chimeras. Where, though lost and bewildered, yet, if of warm imaginations, and inflamed with the ambition of Inventors, they have taken more delight in those obscure and shadowy paths, than any sober follower of truth, within the limits of open day and nature.

Now these follies, so taking in themselves, and so mischievous in their consequences, proceeding from a want of modesty, and due consciousness of the narrow limits of the human understanding, St. Peter,

Peter, in his next precept, with admirable skill, restrains. *Add*, says he,

*to Knowledge*, TEMPERANCE *;

that is, *sobriety*, *moderation*, *continence*, in the pursuit of truth. For as *Virtue*, without *Knowledge*, falls into all kind of FANATICISM in practice; so *Knowledge*, without *Temperance*, leads to all kind of HERESY in opinion. St. Paul observed, even in his time, the seeds of *intemperate* knowledge begin to spring up and spread amongst his converts; and therefore cautions them against *vain philosophy and a knowledge that puffeth up* †. But this so deformed and laid waste the Christian Church in after-times, that the *new earth* seemed, for many ages, to be under a *second curse* of *bringing forth nothing but thorns and thistles*; so much more severe than the *first*, that these delicacies were not

* Ἐγκράτεια signifies moderation, or a temperate use of things in general. To denote the species, the Ancients said, ἐγκρατὴς ἀφροδισίων—γαστρὸς ἐγκρατὴς—ἐγκρατὴς ὕπνου, θυμοῦ, οἴνου. When the species is not thus designed, we have no way of determining the sense of so generical a word, but the context.—Cic. uses *temperantia* in the sense ἐγκράτεια is here explained.—Qui autem, si maxime hoc placeat, *moderatius* tamen id volunt fieri, difficilem quandam TEMPERANTIAM postulant in eo, quod semel admissum coerceri reprimique non potest: ut propemodum justicribus utamur illis, qui omnino avocent a Philosophiâ quam iis qui rebus infinitis *modum* constituant: in reque eo meliore quo major sit, *mediocritatem* desiderent—tamen nec *modus* est ullus *investigandi veri*.—De Fin. l. i. c. 1.

† Col. ii. 8.—1 Cor. viii. 1.

to

to be produced without much labour, and *sweat of the brow*.

II. Here again the ROMAN CHURCH affords us a sad example of the mischiefs of *intemperate knowledge*: For though, as was observed before, there was great scarcity of *true knowledge* to direct their *Virtue*, they abounded in *false knowledge* to corrupt their *Faith*: Though they refused to make the RELIGION OF NATURE the interpreter of *Gospel-righteousness*, they sanctified the VAIN PHILOSOPHY OF THE GREEKS * to explain *justifying Faith*.

We have seen what sort of SAINTS the Church of Rome adores: Let us now see what kind of DOCTORS she builds her faith upon. As their DEVOUT retired to their Cloisters to deform *Virtue*, so their LEARNED assembled in their Schools to corrupt *Faith*. Where, mistaking Theology, which is a science of practice, for a science of speculation, *Knowledge*, which is only the means, they took to be the END of Religion; and as that, which is the end of any thing, cannot be too much cultivated, they pursued *Knowledge* with such *intemperate* rage, that, as if Religion was only a trial of skill, and the rewards of it to be adjudged to the best disputant, they spent their whole lives in agitating and subtilizing questions of faith: Abundantly happy if, with all their toil, they could at length obtain the never-fading titles of *Doctors profound, irrefragable,*

* The philosophy of Aristotle being the foundation of School Divinity.

*subtil*, and *seraphic*. These, under the reverend name of SCHOOLMEN, long monopolized the manufactory of Faith; and wove their cobwebs thin and dark for the hangings of the Sanctuary.

To such then, you will easily believe, the APOSTLE'S CREED soon became too plain and simple. They wanted one that would afford eternal matter for dispute and wrangle. So, from the article of *Mary the* VIRGIN, they invented one of *Mary the* GODDESS: From the article of *Christ once offered on the cross for our redemption*, they spun out a *daily Sacrifice:* and the horrid idea of a *Transubstantiation:* From *his descent into Hell*, they deduced the fable of *Purgatory:* From *belief in the holy Catholic Church*, the blasphemous tenet of the *Pope's infallibility:* From the *communion of Saints*, the idolatrous *worship of dead men:* And from the *forgiveness of sins*, the gainful trade of *auricular confession, and human absolution.*

But none of these strange doctrines being to be found in *Scripture*, they were forced to call in the aid of TRADITION to strengthen the feeble Powers of SCHOOL-SUBTILTY. And Tradition drawing after it a thousand other beggarly errors, which were all now to be supported; this gave rise to an after-birth of Heresies, and fresh employment for the foster-fathers *of the Schools.* So that at length, the true foundation, the simple faith in JESUS THE MESSIAH, was lost and forgotten; and lay for many ages buried under two deformed heaps of rubbish, SCHOOL-DIVINITY and TRADITION. Over

each of which, like the Ædiles in *ancient Rome*, a venerable Magistrate presided, *That* called the *Master of the Sums*, and *This*, of *the Sentences* *.

At last, in God's good time, this precept of *adding temperance to knowledge* began to be attended to; And the truth, which flamed out from the well-conducted labours of such, soon burnt up and consumed this precious superstructure of *wood, hay, and stubble.* When the true Faith, like *oft-tried silver*, appeared again in its native purity and candour. In this condition we received it from our fathers. So sacred a deposite let us religiously preserve, and with the same pious care transmit to our posterity: Having always in mind that *we are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets* (not the Masters of the *Sums* and *Sentences*) *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone* †.

The avoiding these evils therefore, is the advantage which *Knowledge* receives from *Temperance.* A reciprocal advantage *Temperance* receives from *Knowledge:* For *Temperance* being nothing but the withdrawing from all visionary pursuits, and abstaining from all rash judgment, out of a sense and conviction of the weakness of human understanding, was *it* not founded upon *Knowledge*, it would be in danger of degenerating into a slothful Scepticism, a total uncertainty of all things from a superficial examination of the most obvious; a fatal aptitude in concluding that truth was not to be found, from being too soon weary of the search. A condition which, we ex-

* Thomas Aquinas, and Peter Lombart.

† Ephes. ii. 20.

 perience,

perience, hath befallen, and must, unavoidably, befall those, whose *Temperance* is not founded on *Knowledge*. But being thus secured, *Temperance* preserves a vigorous, yet a sober course: For the regular restraint which it imposeth on the mind doth not hinder us from the most active exercise of our faculties, but only confines it to objects fitted for our contemplation.

We have observed, that the reasonableness of the practice of *Temperance* ariseth from our sense of the weakness of human understanding. Now this sense should not only dispose us to be moderate in our own opinions, but to be candid and charitable to the opinions of others; and till *Temperance* hath acquired this quality, it is partial and imperfect.

To render it complete, St. Peter, therefore, in his next precept, injoins us to *add*

*to Temperance*, PATIENCE *;

that is, *long-suffering*, and bearing with the contradiction of Others. This is indeed the natural consequence of a perfect *Temperance*. For having experienced, in our own case, how insensibly errors

* The original is ὑπομονὴ. The reason why the Apostle used this word rather than μακροθυμία, which may seem to be the more proper word for the sense I give to *Patience*, appears to me to be this—The Church, at the time of writing this epistle, was in a subjected and distressed condition. And ὑπομονὴ is the *Patience* of those in subjection, as μακροθυμία is the *Patience* of those in authority. Besides, ὑπομονὴ in the New Testament generally signifies a *Patience* attended with hope and expectation of better. And that sense I make to be required here.

insinuate

insinuate themselves into the mind; how plausibly they assume the air of truth, when called to account; how obstinately they maintain their ground, when now become suspected; and what labour is required to dispossess them, even after they are detected and exposed;—having experienced, I say, all this, we shall be well inclined to bear with *Patience* the contradiction of our erring Brother. We shall still preserve the affection we had for him before he went astray; and shall not suffer his being of another Church, or Sect, or Party, or any thing but an *unchristian life*, to lessen that affection; but with *Temperance* and *Patience* wait the second coming of the Messiah to *separate the tares from the wheat* *.

III. The want of which *virtues*, amongst those, who yet dare to call themselves *the followers of the Lamb*, hath brought more desolation on the Christian Church, than all the persecutions of Pagan Emperors, or the eruptions of northern Barbarians: less Pagan, and less Barbarian, than the author of the PRINCIPLE OF INTOLERANCE, who pretending to sit in the Chair of Him, who here enjoins us *to add patience to temperance*, and calling himself the *Vicar of Christ*, hath not been ashamed to make *him* the pattern of his conduct, who was *an accuser of his brethren, and a murderer from the beginning* †.

The Christian Church, in its infancy, breathed nothing but concord, love, and charity. It had *then* a spirit as pure, and innocent, as the state of

* Matt. xiii. 30. † John viii. 44.

childhood itself. The holy brethren were, *in malice, children*; howbeit, in *understanding*, that is, in rational faith, in vigorous virtue, and in sober knowledge, they were *men*. And thus was the *new Jerusalem built like a city, that is at unity in itself* *. No disputes, no strife, no emulation, but who should most excel in works of charity and piety.

But, alas! this glorious rising of the Gospel, which came with *healing in its wings*, and promised the arrival of that long wished-for day of *everlasting peace*, was of a sudden overcast, and nothing succeeded but storms and tempests. For our evil Genius, the *Prince of the air*, was early at work to obscure and deface the promised triumphs of the *Sun of Righteousness*. Nor was the engine he employed to defeat man's *Restoration*, different from that, with which he procured his *Fall:* It was, still, *Knowledge* without its regulator, *Temperance*.

For when now the SCHOOLS, by obtruding on the world a system of sanctified absurdities under the name of *catholic religion*, had produced schisms and dissensions; and the CLOISTERS, by perfecting their saints in a sour inhumanity and holy pride, had raised a spirit impatient of contradiction (and the papal history informs us, that their learnedst Doctors were the most unintelligible, and their Holiest saints the least forbearing); then it was that their Church, impregnated with these mischiefs, brought forth the Fury, PERSECUTION.

Of all the *Mysteries of iniquity*, that of persecution is the soonest learnt, and easiest reduced to

* Psal. cxxii. 3.

practice:

practice: On which account it hath had its proficients, that were fit for nothing else, in every Sect and Party: But the honour of reducing it to a science, and conducting it on certain principles, is solely due to the CHURCH OF ROME. For no sooner was a people found who refused to receive *the mark of the Beast*, than, assisted by the Schools and Cloisters, it erected that infernal Butchery, the INQUISITION, the master-piece of its *ecclesiastical Policy*; which, under the name of an HOLY OFFICE, as directly violates the law of Nature and Nations in the injustice of its *process*, as all the precepts of the Gospel in the inhumanity of its *judgments*.

But (holy Jesus!) should I relate the tricks, the treacheries, the frauds, the rapines, the delays, the horrors of imprisonment, the tortures of the rack, the bloodshed, the murders practised there, murders committed with so exquisite a malice, that *body*, *soul*, and *reputation*, are intended to fall a sacrifice at once—should I but represent, I say, these things to you in their native colours, your just indignation would endanger that heaven-born Charity, which it is my aim to recommend to you even here, and here chiefly, where I am pointing out the enormous evils which the exclusion of her blessed influence occasions. And though I have expressed myself with the free resentment of a man who regards POPERY, not only as the corruption of true Religion, but as an insult on the SENSE, and an invasion of the LIBERTIES of mankind; yet would I carefully endeavour to keep within the bounds of that charity which constitutes the character of a minister of Christ.

I shall therefore draw a veil over this unhappy scene, which gives so deadly a wound to the integrity of the Christian name; and inflicts so lasting a disgrace even on our common nature. Content to have given you one general view of the PAPAL RELIGION, which, under the name of a *Religion*, is indeed no other than an impious *Farce*. I have shewn you, in their order, the three acts of which it consists: The first played by their *Saints*, and their subject, *fanatic Virtue*: The second by their *Doctors*, and theirs, *unintelligible Faith*: The third by their *Priests*, and theirs, the antichristian *discipline of racks and gibbets*. I have shewn you likewise the connexion these three parts have on one another; and the natural tendency of the two first to produce the dreadful *catastrophe* of the third. For when Virtue becomes stript of humanity, and Faith forsaken of reason, charity is soon lost in zeal, and piety changed to persecution.

Such a view should teach us to set a just value on our own happy Constitution, where *Gospel-light* and *Civil liberty* go hand in hand. And be You well assured that these two blessings must stand or fall together: That Civil slavery will make room for Popish cruelty; and that Popish superstition will support a tyrant in trampling on our laws. For the politician knows that the surest way of fixing slavery is to tie it on the consciences of men: And the priest hath experienced, that the mind is never so tame and servile, so submiss in swallowing contradictions, as when the body is already broken and humbled by the stroke of tyranny.

Thus

Thus hath the Apostle shewn us, that the security against the evils of dissension and intolerance are *Temperance* and *Patience*; which teach us to *feel* our own weakness, and to *bear* with that of Others. But here again the infirmity of our Common nature betrays itself; and *Temperance* and *Patience*, excellent and divine as they are, become subject to the general fate of human virtues, grow degenerate and depraved. Thus, too often, moderation and tolerance sink into carelessness and indifference, a fatal indifference, for all truth, and all religion. That men, and even Churches, are but too apt to fall into that remiss and *lukewarm* state, for which, the Holy Spirit denounced so severe a judgment on the *Laodiceans* *, we have melancholy proof. Nor is such a degeneracy hard to be conceived. For when the corrosive ferment of bitter Zeal, which desolates mankind under a pretended concern for the glory of God, has, by the infusion of the cool and heavenly dew of moderation, been brought to a gentle temperament; the Mind, become tired, and ashamed of its late tumultuous disorders, is apt to sink into the other extreme, of a languid and unactive indifference. I wish I had no cause to say, that this very age and place have seen this shameful infirmity of our nature exemplified. And whoever reflects upon the indiscreet zeal which disturbed the Church in the beginning of this century, and on the nature of that *effectual* cure which began to operate, before we reached to the middle of it, will not, if he be serious and im-

* Rev. iii. 16.

partial,

partial, accuse me of an uncandid reflection.—But to return. To provide against this evil is the design of our Apostle's next precept, which bids us *add to Patience*, GODLINESS.

And then (as St. James adviseth *) we *let Patience have her perfect work.* For then, at the same time that we preserve the greatest moderation towards others, we shall keep alive the holy fire of innoxious zeal in ourselves. For by *Godliness* is meant the warm and affectionate discharge of all the duties of divine intercourse, whether in public acts of devotion, or in private sentiments of meditation.

With exquisite skill likewise hath our Apostle raised this second ORDER of Christian architecture, *godliness*, or the *divine virtue*, on the former, namely, the *human*. For, by this means, *godliness* cannot degenerate, as it did in the CHURCH of ROME, from not observing this direction, either into fanaticism, superstition, or bigotry; but will remain sober, rational, and truly sublime.

And yet there is another danger to which it is obnoxious. For, by long and intense exercise in holy offices, the joy and transport that elevates the mind, thus filled with its true and proper object, GOD, naturally disposeth us to contemn all inferior things; and from despising the things, but too often, to despise the persons who delight in them: And by making odious comparisons, like the *Pharisee to the Publican*, to forget our relation, our near relation, both by nature and grace, to the meanest of our species. Hence ariseth SPIRITUAL PRIDE, the last and

* Chap. i. 4.

most

most fatal enemy to true *Godliness*. Now for this, too, the Apostle, in his next precept, provides a remedy. *Add*, says he,

*to godliness*, BROTHERLY-KINDNESS.

Thus begins the third, and last ORDER of this Christian building. And, from this time, *Godliness*, placed between, and supported, on each hand, by the *human* and *social* virtues, becomes stable and permanent. And while it receives this united aid from both, it returns it back again to both.

We have shewn the benefits *temperance and patience* receive from *godliness:* We are now to speak of that which *brotherly-kindness* receives from it.

The most beauteous, and elevated branch of *brotherly-kindness* is FRIENDSHIP, whose natural root and origin is similitude of manners. But *these* being as often bad as good, friendship becomes as frequently a confederacy in vice, as a community of virtue. So that this adorable virtue, the cordial of private life, and largest source of public good, by being built on the false foundation of *ungodliness*, hath often produced all that mischief to Society it was designed by nature to prevent. But when, as here, it is rightly placed on *godliness*, it stands secure from abuse, and is enabled to bring forth all its genuine fruits of public beneficence.

*Brotherly kindness* is now only liable to one disorder—for human depravity will shew itself to the very last—and it is this, that *brotherly-kindness* being enjoined to be built on *godliness*, or Religion, men are yet too apt, like the *Pharisees* of old, to confine

confine their *brotherly-kindness* within their own *sect* or *pale:* While all *without* are treated by them as the wounded traveller by the Priest and Levite.

But this narrow and partial benevolence the Apostle has effectually removed in the concluding precept of my text. *Add*, says he, in the last place,

*to brotherly-kindness*, CHARITY;

that is, universal love of all mankind. This regulates and perfects all the other virtues; and is, itself, in no want of a reformer. All the other virtues, as we have observed, degenerate both by defect and excess: This is incapable of either. Its nature and essence secure it from defect; and its fruits and products from excess.

This then is the crown, the keystone of this heavenly edifice, this triumphant Arch of immortality; or, as the holy Apostle more emphatically calls it, THE BOND OF PERFECTNESS*. This, with respect to the foregoing Virtues, is like the gilt dome or covering of the imperial Palace. Without which, the strongest foundations, the richest ornamented walls, the best-disposed apartments, become, in a little time, but naked and deformed ruins; open to every storm, and exposed to all the desolation of wasting elements.

WITHOUT THIS, if we may believe his fellow-labourer St. PAUL, the rest of the Christian building hath neither ornament nor use. The very FOUNDATION is precarious and unstable: *Though I have all* FAITH, says he, *so that I could remove mountains, and have not* CHARITY, *I am nothing.*

* Col. iii. 14.

VIRTUE,

VIRTUE, likewise, without it, is equally unprofitable: *Though I give my body to be burnt, and have not* CHARITY, *it profiteth me nothing.* KNOWLEDGE likewise without it is vain and brutal: *Though I speak with the Tongues of men and of angels, and have all* KNOWLEDGE, *and have not* CHARITY, *I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.* Even GODLINESS is unacceptable without it: *Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have not* CHARITY, *I am nothing.* Lastly, BROTHERLY-KINDNESS, when separated from it, goes unrewarded: *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not* CHARITY, *it profiteth me nothing.*

But, IN THIS, as the same Apostle tells us, are comprised all the efficacies of the foregoing graces: For, like FAITH, he tells us, it *believeth all things*, it *hopeth all things*; like VIRTUE, it *thinketh no evil, doth not behave itself unseemly*; like true KNOWLEDGE, it *vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*; like TEMPERANCE and PATIENCE, it *suffereth long, and is kind, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, endureth all things*; like GODLINESS, it *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*; and like BROTHERLY-KINDNESS, it *envieth not, seeketh not its own.*

In a word, beginning then with FAITH, and finishing with CHARITY, or, as the same Apostle much better expresseth it, FAITH WORKING BY CHARITY.*, we come by just degrees to erect, after

* Gal. v. 6.

the

the divine model here given us, that heavenly edifice of *Christian perfection, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord**.

* Eph. ii. 20, 21.

# SERMON IX.

## OF CHURCH AUTHORITY.

MATT. xxiii. 9, 10.

CALL NO MAN YOUR FATHER, UPON THE EARTH: FOR ONE IS YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. NEITHER BE YE CALLED MASTERS: FOR ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST.

TO claim Rule or Mastery in matters of Religion, on mere human Authority, shews so much impudence; and to acknowledge the claim, so egregious folly; that one could hardly conceive any man, who had been *delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God*, should be in danger, either of assuming it himself, or submitting to it when assumed by others. For what FATHER, doth common sense bid us acknowledge, but him who *begot us through the Gospel; our Father which is in Heaven:* Or what MASTER, but him who *visited and redeemed his people*, even *Jesus Christ the righteous*.

1. But this Government of God's Church under the *Gospel*, not being administered, as under the *Law*, in PERSON, but by a WRITTEN RULE; the Ministers

Ministers of the *word*, under pretence of interpreting it, took occasion to introduce their own authority; and on that, by insensible degrees, a very wicked Usurpation. The business of interpreting was, at first, modestly assumed, as a mere act of *Charity*, to assist the brethren in the study of God's word. But the employment being commonly confined to a certain *Order*, this act of Charity soon grew into an office of Authority, which at last put the *Law* and the *Gloss* upon an equal footing.

The pretence for the exercise of this office, on which the Usurpation took its rise, was the OBSCURITIES in sacred Scripture. Unhappily, it was not understood, that the *very Obscurities themselves* were a sufficient evidence that the subject of them could never be matter of faith necessary to salvation. What perhaps contributed to obstruct so obvious a truth, was the great privileges ascribed to *Christian Faith*. So that men became more solicitous to have it large and full, than to have it pure and perfect.

2. The administration of Christ's Kingdom by a *written Word*, on his withdrawing bodily from his Church, gave another advance to this usurped Authority, of a more public nature. It necessitated the Church to assume a form approaching to that of mere human Societies; in which, Rulers and Governors were ordained to keep the several members in subordination to the whole; which could be only done by investing such Governors with a power to inforce a *common formula of Faith*. And though

though this was barely necessary to keep Society together; yet we see, how easily it might be abused, to introduce an usurpation over Conscience.

3. Hitherto we have considered the steps to this unjust dominion, condemned in my text, as they advanced from WITHIN the Lord's heritage: Others rose from WITHOUT. For our *civil* as well as *spiritual* Governors have been equally disposed to play the Tyrant over Conscience; and, not rarely, have agreed to share the Tyranny between them.

The *civil Magistrate*, the Apostle tells us, *is the minister of God to us for good*; that is, the means of procuring and preserving those blessings, which our reasonable nature, and the indulgence of Providence, concur in enabling us to enjoy. In order to this end, the enforcement of the GREAT PRINCIPLES both of *common morality*, and of *natural religion*, fall under his Jurisdiction. Such of them, I mean, as are absolutely necessary to form that fundamental bond of civil Society, OBEDIENCE FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE. But, under this pretence, the civil Magistrate hath frequently attempted to draw in the WHOLE of Religion into his Cognizance. And this usurpation, many mistakes concerning his Office, and the nature of civil Society, joining in with imaginary necessities of State, contributed to support. He observed, that the *regal* and *sacerdotal* character were of old commonly united in the same person. And the particular reasons of this conjunction not being considered, he imagined that what was only an accidental coalition, was a per-

petual union. Again, he supposed civil Society, whose sole end is the security of one certain kind of good, comprised in the temporal liberty and property of man, to be ordained, for the attainment of all possible good of every kind; which necessarily implied his care in, and jurisdiction over, Religion. Lastly he concluded, that NECESSITY OF STATE required an Universal conformity to the *Religion of the Sovereign*. A *necessity* merely imaginary: for wherever religious TOLERATION is allowed, diversities of sects never affect the peace of civil Society. Indeed, when the Magistrate begins to violate the rights of Conscience, then this *necessity* becomes real: but it is a necessity of his own making; it does not arise from the nature of things. Therefore the cause, which was in his own power to reform, he should have reformed; rather than have sought to remedy the effects by further injustice. He should have taken off that iniquitous restraint; which, in forcing to Church-conformity, by civil penalties, hath occasioned the violation of the national peace; rather than, by additional penalties, to seek to regain that peace, in an universal conformity of mere outward profession; under which the power of Religion vanishes.

Such were the pretences of our ECCLESIASTICAL and CIVIL Governors, to *Mastery* and Dominion in the *Lord's Inheritance:* From whence we may collect the care and tenderness of our blessed Master, in this early warning to his followers, against exercising or submitting to, this Antichristian Claim. *Call no*

*man*

*man Father upon the Earth: for one is your Father which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called Masters: for one is your Master, even Christ:* Which words plainly imply, that whoever requires religious obedience, or a right over Conscience, by his own Authority, is an Usurper in another's Jurisdiction; and whoever pays obedience to such a Claim, is a rebel to his lawful Master. For, revealed Religion coming immediately from God, the LAWGIVER, and the SUPREME MAGISTRATE, are one and the same; and all Authority properly resides in him.

But Man's claim is not only unjust, and Man's submission to it sinful; but they are both, in the highest degree, extravagant and absurd.

A jurisdiction in matters of Faith is what no human authority is capable of administering: as all human authority is subject to error and mistake. This is so obvious an objection, that the Bishop of *Rome*, who first set up this claim, or at least, digested it into a System, soon saw the necessity of supporting it on a pretended INFALLIBILITY. And though this was adding blasphemy to usurpation, yet it made the *Mystery of Ungodliness* consistent: and free, at least, from the absurdity of those, who confess themselves *fallible*; and yet exact the same submission to their Authority as if they could not err. Which of them is the most absurd, is easily understood; but which of them the most presuming, is hard to say: For if one intrenches upon Heaven, the other ventures to insult common sense.

But the mere weakness of the understanding is not the only circumstance that disqualifies men for

this authority over Conscience. The prejudices, arising from the passions, make the unreasonableness of implicit submission still more apparent. The most specious exercise of human Authority is doubtless in those Assemblies called GENERAL COUNCILS. And yet every one, not an utter stranger to Church-history, must have learnt, that the same partialities mix themselves in their conclusions, which mislead *Civil Assemblies*. And, where is the wonder, if Churchmen, acting on an usurped plan, should deviate from the paths of *Faith* and *Charity*, when we every day see Statesmen, in their proper office, mistake the plainer road of Justice and the public Good.

*One*, therefore, *is our Father, which is in Heaven: One is our Master, even Christ.* And their Will, as announced to us in *Sacred* SCRIPTURE, is the *only Law*, to which Christians, as such, are held and obliged. On this Rock, where Christ built his Church, every private Man may safely repose his conscience. To this truly infallible Guide, we may commit ourselves with perfect confidence; in this assurance, that so much of God's Will as is necessary for us to know, is easy to be known; and that whatever is dark or difficult in his *Word*, is therefore not necessary to be known.

But if human Authority hath usurped upon Conscience; there are not wanting those who, on the other hand, have used Conscience for a *cloke of maliciousness:* and, on pretence of *one being our Father which is in Heaven*, have denied that Obedience to the CHURCH OF CHRIST, which, as a mere

mere human Society, it might claim; and which, on that very footing, Christ himself hath commanded us to pay unto it, where he directs his followers to *hear the Church* *.

But Authority, which these words imply, is a mockery, without submission and obedience. Hence the reasonableness of subscription to a *general formulary of Faith*; which the nature of Society makes necessary, in order to tie a number of particulars into one body. A bond, which may have its due efficacy without violating any of the rights of Conscience: For, all the jurisdiction which follows from it is only this, that so long as any member of the Community professeth that general *formulary*, which the end of Society requires, to admit him into Church-communion, he be obedient to such Laws of his spiritual Governors, as concern DISCIPLINE: So far, the Authority of the Church, as a religious Society, extends; and no farther. For whenever a private Member of it can no longer, with a good conscience, subscribe to the *points of Doctrine* professed; or conform to the *mode of worship* in practice; or submit to the *rules of discipline* inforced, all that remains is expulsion, or Excommunication; but, unattended with opprobrious censures, civil incapacities, or corporal or pecuniary inflictions; in a word, with every consequence that may injuriously affect the person, fortune, or reputation of the ejected Member.

II. But to return now to my text. As the reason against *calling any one our Father upon the Earth*, is

* Matt. xviii. 17.

not founded in our own strength, and our neighbour's weakness, but in the common infirmity of all; the other prohibition naturally follows, *that neither should we affect to be called Masters.* For if, purely to preserve the rights of Conscience, and to vindicate the Authority due to God's tribunal, we refuse to acknowledge man's jurisdiction; with what face can we claim that for ourselves, which we have denied to all others?

And yet it is a melancholy truth, that when the great separation was made from POPERY, on this very principle, that it had usurped the titles of FATHER and LORD, due only to God and his Son; Those holy Men, who were obedient to the *warning voice*, which called them out of *Babylon*, were too apt to forget the condition, on which only, they had a right to vindicate their Christian liberty from the dominion of a MASTER; which was, the not pretending to MASTERSHIP themselves.

The spirit of Dominion soon betrayed itself in these newly manumised Churches of God: First, by too unreasonably narrowing the bottom of Church-communion; and then, by persecuting of those whose Consciences would not suffer them to subscribe to their terms. So that the simple, uniform GOSPEL FAITH, on which the Protestant Churches were professedly founded, soon became broken into Sects and Conventicles: And every defenceless Party, which had most suffered for opinions, no sooner got Civil Power on their side, than they returned the injustice with double injury. For Persecution, though it may strengthen and

improve our Faith, doth not so easily enlarge our Charity.

It hath been offered in excuse for this behaviour of the Protestant Churches, on their separation from the Church of *Rome* (for, their perseverance in it afterwards, will admit of no apology), that the SPIRIT OF PERSECUTION hath a marvellous malignity in its nature, above all other errors, to corrupt and deprave the human mind. So that when every other Iniquity of Papal power had been now detected and expelled; this still skulked behind, within the close recesses of the heart; and, as often as it could disguise its deformity under a zeal for the *work of Reformation*, was ready to step out again and play the Devil.

This is not to be wondered at. There is scarce a material error in the CHURCH OF ROME, which doth not sooth and cherish some or other of our corrupt passions and prejudices: but PERSECUTION regales them all: It flatters our SPIRITUAL PRIDE, the vanity of superior knowledge, and a purer faith: It confirms our BIGOTRY, the mistaken zeal for the honour of God and holy Church; and it supports our AMBITION, the itch for *Mastery*, and misrule. Were it not for so powerful a bias, this Iniquity, which had most imbittered their thraldom, and kept them longest in their chains, must, on their first deliverance, have been immediately detected, and marked out for execration.

It is true, however, there was another accident, which found business for this *Fury*, when once it had got harbour in the fair bosom of the reformed

Churches. The Protestant profession was founded on the principle of FREE INQUIRY, and the liberty of private judgment. But as it is rare for men not to abuse a long-sequestered privilege, when new recovered, by pushing the exercise of it to an extreme; so it happened in the *work of reformation.* Several curious fancies grew up with the simple Faith of that *Gospel*, from whence the Reformed, in general, sought their knowledge of God's will. And they being, through their long inexperience, as unknowing in the real nature of Church-communion, as inattentive to the simplicity of Christian-faith, through desertion of their Guide; these fancies, harmless, indeed, while held indifferent, were, by their fond inventors, soon made important, and the terms of Fellow-membership. The effect was fatal: It served to rend the Reformation into various Sects and Parties. We may be sure, the Church of *Rome* would take advantage of this miscarriage. They did so: and upbraided the *work of Reformation* with being conducted by a Spirit of confusion: They inferred, that when men had once left the *centre of unity*, and would seek truth by a *liberty of thinking*, which authorized private judgment, there would soon be as many false opinions as free Inquirers: And as many Sects as both. The Reformed seemed sensible of this opprobrium: But it being supposed impracticable to go back to the simplicity of the *Gospel-Faith*; and on that simplicity, to regulate the terms of Church-communion; they contented themselves with stopping where they were; which they thought they should be able to

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do, by applying unjust coercion to all such novelties, as, either by their subtilty or plausibility, promised the birth of a *new sect*, or, by their grossness and extravagance, reflected dishonour upon *Reformation* itself.

To proceed. This Error was not more disgraceful to the *beginnings* of *Reformation*, than fatal to the *progress* of it.

It hath, indeed, been observed, and perhaps with truth, that the restraint of religious liberty hath made men more eager to exert and exercise the right of thinking for themselves. But this was accidental; when, after a long and indolent resignation of the understanding to authority, some casual persecution of a new opinion had served, as a stimulus, to quicken the benumbed faculties of Reason. And even then, the benefit was much allayed by the small helps which such times afford to the discovery of truth; and the great danger there is in using such as may be had: Hence it was, that during the twilight of dawning Science, men, the best intentioned, and naturally the best qualified, did, in struggling to get free, advance such crude and hasty conclusions, as greatly discredited that *Gospel-liberty*, they were then labouring to promote. Of this we have many unhappy examples in the first efforts towards Reformation.

But the issue would be very different in different circumstances; in such especially where the Spirit of Liberty had done its general work; and had established the few great principles of Gospel-truth and purity. If, amongst these, the antichristian discipline

discipline of restraint should be received, adieu to all further advances in Reformation. Coercive power would from henceforth keep it for ever tied down to that imperfect state, in which Church Authority had found it. For, in this case, the *reverence* paid to the new Authority, under which particulars had sheltered themselves from an old Tyranny, would concur with its *power*, to depress and discredit private Judgment.

Nor would this prove a slight or trivial evil. For we are not to think the work of Reformation could be perfected at once. Those who know, in general, what prejudices old habits impress on the most vigorous mind, even while enlarging itself by Liberty; and those who know in particular, how hastily and sometimes how tumultuarily the Reformation was brought about, will easily understand, that the whole Gospel Regimen was not likely to be restored together: and that such a perfect recovery required time and leisure to study; and freedom to profit by our studies, in *the Word of God.*

But still further. Did persecuting Churches discourage private judgment in order to take the matter into their own hands, that *Truth* might have the sanction of Authority, and they themselves the honour of doing it further service, something might be said, perhaps, in excuse for this proceeding. But, alas! their infringement of religious liberty arises from a different principle. They discourage private inquiry, not because it is carrying on by better hands, but because there needs no inquiry to be made: The work of Reformation, they say, is already

ready perfected; and the duty of particulars is now to acquiesce. A strange conclusion, which the practice of unjust restraint, indeed, hath made familiar, but is, in itself, a very indecent presumption. For, as a Protestant Church claims no INFALLIBILITY, like the Church of *Rome*, nor immediate INSPIRATION, like fanatic Sectaries, it must needs confess itself obnoxious to error: and from the unfavourable circumstances spoken of before, very likely to fall into it. And then, whatever mistakes it had committed through the condition of humanity, it might, from time to time, have redressed with good grace, on the modest principles of Reformation. This was an advantage which *infallible* and *inspired* Pretenders had, by their knavery and folly, put for ever out of their power. But restraint and persecution deprived the Reformed Churches of this advantage: For, when once they were in the train of implicit submission, they grew ashamed to own they had any errors; and with reason; for what could more expose the criminal absurdity of such proceeding? Therefore, whenever the force of Truth had worked a change in the general principles of a Protestant Church, as it did more than once in the matter of *Calvinistical predestination*, men had rarely the courage to confess it. Which made one of their enemies observe, with a sneer, *That it was allowable for the* New Reform *to change: but not avow the change* *.

* Il est bien permis de changer dans la nouvelle reforme, mais il n'est pas permis d'avouer qu'on change. Bossuet Var. V. i. p. 405.

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There is yet another mischief behind, which is still more general; I mean, that of Schisms, divisions, and increase of Sects and parties. For though, as hath been observed, the effect of Persecution, in these circumstances, is to stifle Truth; yet it gives life and vigour to a thousand Counterfeits. For, that thorough discipline of uniformity, which brings all to one dead level in the *Church of Rome*, is utterly impracticable in the *Churches of the Reformed*. Protestant Rulers, indeed, may, by *stirring up* the humours, elude and prevaricate with their own principles; but it is impossible they should ever go so far as to be able to put in practice the principle of their capital enemy: And yet there is no other that hath force enough to *expel* those humours. Now although the *mischief to the State*, from various sects and parties, may be reasonably well amended by a just TOLERATION, afforded to such, whom the Church, from the narrowness of its communion, ejects; yet the *mischief to Religion* still remains. The Object of Civil Government is PEACE; and this, a *toleration* secures: But the object of Religion is TRUTH; and this a diversity of Sects, arising from the cause in question, will always discredit. So that, in this sense, SCHISM is a real and irremediable evil, which no Civil prudence can palliate or cure: and which nothing but the Church, by widening its Communion, can prevent or remove.

Thus have I endeavoured to explain the equity and wisdom of my text. I have pointed out the good which follows from the observance, and

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the evils which arise from the violation, of the precept.

What remains is only to caution you from suffering the ABUSES here exposed (and now ABUSES are become the favourite topic of declamation *, and the fashionable motive for disbelief), let not this, I say, prejudice you either against the REFORMATION in particular, or against the CHRISTIAN RELIGION in general.

Those Communities, and Bodies of Men, who made the first secession from the *Church of Rome*, did it, amongst other causes, to avoid the *profession* of those *errors*, and the *practice* of those *superstitions*, which that antichristian power tyrannically inforced upon Conscience. The measure was evidently right. And if they narrowed their justification on that partial principle, *that their opinions were true, and their adversaries' false*, instead of carrying it to that genuine and more generous ground, *That Christian Liberty gives every man a right to worship God according to his Conscience*; and consequently, by so doing, laid the seeds of unjust restraint; this is no more to be admired, where no inspiration is pretended, than that, in *Civil matters*, men should labour to promote the general good on erroneous or mistaken Principles. Many of the Chief Instruments of our deliverance from Popery and arbitrary Power, by the late happy *Revolution*, proceeded, we know, in their accomplishment of

* See Lord Bolingbroke's posthumous Volumes, whose reasoning, such as it is, proceeds, from one end to the other, on this single topic.

that,

that glorious work, on maxims, which controverted the true origine of Government, and were unfriendly to the benefits it procures. Yet what honest man doth not rank them amongst the favoured Servants of Providence, employed in the advancement of a general Good? Why then should the *work of Reformation* be more hardly thought of, because the Instruments of Christian Liberty were not more dexterous in disengaging themselves from inveterate prejudices, than the Instruments of Civil Liberty? We must assign both events to the particular providence of God; or give them both up to the direction of Fate and Fortune. We must either be content to join the Character of Protestant to that of Patriot, or we must throw them both off together.

As little ought those unjust measures to prejudice us against the *Gospel in general:* which was so far from leading *Men* into them, or encouraging *Churches* to persevere in them, that the genius of the Dispensation is manifestly violated thereby.

The sum of all is this, that if we would not dishonour our FATHER, and his Son Jesus, our MASTER; nor give Scandal to the good, nor a handle of blasphemy to the bad, we should no longer elude this great Commandment; but obey it in that candour and ingenuity, in which it was delivered. To *call no Man Father upon Earth, because one is our Father in Heaven*; nor aspire *ourselves to be called Master, because one is our Master, even Christ.*

# SERMON X.

## OF CHURCH AUTHORITY.

MATT. xxiii. 2, 3.

THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES SIT IN MOSES' SEAT: ALL THEREFORE WHATSOEVER THEY BID YOU OBSERVE, THAT OBSERVE AND DO; BUT DO NOT YE AFTER THEIR WORKS: FOR THEY SAY, AND DO NOT.

THE SCRIBES and PHARISEES, the public Teachers of the LAW, were now fallen into that depravity of manners, which the *Law* had foretold and condemned; and consequently, sunk into that general neglect, which is ever the lot of profligate Instructors, whether set over us by civil or divine Appointment.

An Impostor, who had a *new* System to introduce, upon the *established*, thus shaken by the corrupt morals of its Teachers, would certainly have improved so favourable a circumstance, by inflaming the general aversion against those who most stood in his way. But the *Son of God* declined this advantage: on the contrary, he reproved this popular prejudice, though so friendly to his own Mission;

Mission; and endeavoured to reconcile them to their Teachers, his inveterate Enemies, on such rational principles as best affirmed the People's Obedience, and their Directors' Authority. Secure in his own Virtue, he rejected the obliquities of human Policy: and, in order to rectify the error on which the mischiefs of a despised authority subsist, He instructs his hearers to distinguish between the *public* and *private* Character of the Teacher. He shews them that though Men, who *say and do not*, should never be followed for EXAMPLES; yet, that Ministers of Religion, who *sit in Moses' chair*, and are invested with authority to teach the *Law*, are to be attended to as INSTRUCTORS, when, in their office, they denounce and inforce the ordinances of God. Nothing appears more reasonable than this distinction.

And yet in another place of the same Evangelist, our Holy Master seems to insinuate a very different doctrine. "BEWARE (says he) of false Prophets, "which come to you in Sheeps cloathing, but "inwardly they are ravening Wolves. Ye shall "know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes "of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good "tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree "bringeth forth evil fruit. Wherefore by their "fruits ye shall know them*."

Here, we see, it is expressly said, That they whose morals do not correspond to the purity of their doctrine, shall have no regard or observance paid unto them; but, shall be shunned and avoided

* Matt. vii. 15—20.

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as deceivers; because the corruption of their manners is a sufficient proof of the imposture of their pretences. *Beware of false Prophets—Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* On the other hand, our text instructs us to reverence the immoral Teacher; and to separate his manners from his Doctrine. *All whatsoever they bid you observe, That observe and do; but do not ye after their works.*

To reconcile these two places of Scripture, it will be sufficient to observe, That very different Persons and Characters are the subjects of these two different directions.

They of my Text were an Order of ESTABLISHED TEACHERS; with whom the custody of God's Word was intrusted; to be dispensed on all occasions to the People. These men had grossly *abused* indeed, but yet not *forfeited* their trust; and therefore it was the part of every good Citizen to support them in their Character. And though the *Jewish Economy* was now near the eve of its dissolution; when part was to be abolished, part to be reformed, and the remaining part to be completed, by the last Revelation of God's Will, intrusted to his Son; Yet the dignity of Truth, and the eminence of that Person who came to bring Truth into the world, required, that the interests even of an expiring Dispensation should not be neglected.

But the FALSE PROPHETS, mentioned in the other Scripture, *who come in Sheeps clothing, but with wolfish dispositions*, and therefore to be shunned and avoided as deceivers, are such as assume a very

different character. The character of God's extraordinary Messengers, intrusted with the delivery of a *new Revelation* to mankind. For, about this time the expectation of the promised Messiah was very general. So that selfish and ambitious men were encouraged to personate his Character. Though the marks, by which they are described, might, one would think, have prevented the mischiefs the delusions drew upon this infatuated People.

Having now seen the perfect agreement of the different rules delivered in these two Scriptures; Let us enquire into the *reasons* of them.

In the caution against *false Prophets* it is directed, that, in case the morals of a pretended Messenger from God be inconsistent with his Office, we should shun and avoid him as a cheat. And surely with much reason. The very nature of things informing us, that, when God thinks fit to reveal his Will, in an extraordinary way, to man, he will not disgrace his dispensation by an unworthy Instrument. Both the *dignity* and the *interests* of Religion require, that the first bearer of it should be thoroughly possessed of that power of virtue which true Religion bestows.

It is highly absurd to fancy, that so bright an emanation from the source of Light and Purity, as *divine grace and favour*, should be conveyed to us through unclean and polluted hands. Neither would the Author of good endure the near approach and intercourse of such an Agent; neither could the good, he bestows, be so conveyed, without stain and defilement.

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The interests of Religion will not suffer so impure a conveyance. In propagating a new Religion, there are many corrupt prejudices to overcome. To see therefore the Messenger of God untouched with the importance of his high commission, and unrenewed himself with the renovation he conveys to others, would afford those prejudices too much aid and assistance.

But, this sanctity of manners, which is so expedient to support the honour and interests of the mission, is indeed the natural and inseparable attendant on the Office. For, in the promulgation of a new Religion, besides those marks of truth arising from the reasonableness and purity of the doctrine, which shew it worthy of God; to prove it actually came from him there is need of certain *miraculous gifts*, which the Holy Spirit imparts to those with whom he then condescends to dwell. But the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit is the *Sanctification of the heart*.

From all this, we must conclude, that, when our blessed Master warns us to reject all such for Impostors who pretend to an extraordinary commission from God, with morals unsuitable to their message, he doth it upon the best grounds of truth and expediency.

But now we must be careful to observe, that the case of *such* is very different from theirs, whom God, in the ordinary course of his providence, raiseth up, from time to time, as the bare Instruments of a REFORMATION in Religion; and who pretend to no higher character: Of whose agency, Providence

avails itself to free an old established Religion from the errors contracted through length of time and the malice of men. Here, the same conclusion will not hold; most of those circumstances being wanting, which made the *inconsistency* between the public and private Character of the *extraordinary Agent:* And God, now administering the affairs of his Church by the settled economy of his common providence, may sometimes be well supposed to do here, as in the rest of his moral dispensations, to *produce good out of evil*; to use wicked Instruments, in the natural course of things, to promote the ends of virtue; and make the oblique interests of the world serve to advance the honour, and to restore the purity of his Laws.

Of this different conduct, the Jewish History affords us an example. When God, at various periods, revealed his Will to particular families, and to his chosen people; the agents and messengers, whom he honoured with his commands, were selected from the most virtuous amongst men; such as NOAH, ABRAHAM, and MOSES. But when, during the established order of things, he decreed in the course of his providence, either to execute vengeance on the oppressors of *his People*; to purge the holy land from *Idolatry*; or to punish the transgressors of the *Law*; he frequently employed the agency of wicked kings and rulers, to bring his judgments to their purposed issue. But we need not wonder at this designation, when we see Providence did not disdain to employ the like imperfect Instruments in a work that approached still nearer to the dignity of

the first operation of divine Love; I mean the ESTABLISHMENT of Religion: of which, that of the *Law* was committed to DAVID, and that of the *Gospel*, to CONSTANTINE.

This, our Adversaries of the *Church of Rome*, do not sufficiently consider *, when with so much triumph

* The celebrated M. Bossuet says,—Mr. Burnet prend beaucoup de peine à entasser des exemples de Princes trcs-déreglés dont Dieu s'est servi pour de grans ouvrages. Qui en doute? Mais—montrera-t-il un seul exemple où Dieu voulant REVELER aux hommes quelque verité importante et inconnuë durant de siecles, pour ne pas dire entierement inouie, ait choisi un Roi aussi scandaleux que Henri VIII. et un Evêque aussi lâche et aussi corrumpu que Cranmer? Hist. des Var. l. viii. tom. i. p. 349, 8vo. Here the learned Writer plainly confounds the two different Characters distinguished above. The Instruments of *Reformation* pretended to no agency or commission from God, to REVEAL any thing to Man. And if they discovered an *important truth which had lain hid for many ages*, it was by laying open the *Scriptures* to the inspection of all men; after they had been so long locked up from the vulgar, in the learned languages.—But he goes on—Si le Schisme de l'Angleterre, si la reformation Anglicane est un ouvrage divin, rien n'y sera plus divin que la PRIMAUTE' Ecclesiastique du Roi, puisque ce n'est pas seulement par la que la rupture avec Rome, c'est-a-dire, selon les Protestans, le fondement necessaire de toute bonne reforme, a commencé, mais que c'est encore le seul point où l'on n'a jamais varié depuis le Schisme. Id. ib.—Now, though I take the SUPREMACY of the Magistrate to be a *divine work*, in the sense that all civil Institutions, founded on the principles of Equity and

triumph against the work of *Reformation*, they object to us those impure Instruments, who had neither motives

and Justice, are the *ordinance* of God [Rom. xiii. 2.] yet it is not pretended to be a *divine work* (as the learned writer puts it) in consequence of its being an establishment introduced by the Instruments of *Reformation:* because the Character of *such Instruments* is very different from that of an *inspired Agent*, sent immediately from God, to reveal his will to mankind; into whose Message nothing merely human can insinuate itself under the form of a divine institution. The *Reformation* itself, which these *Instruments* have established, will likewise partake of the imperfections of the Founders. So that the *continuance* of an error no more impeacheth the providence of such a work, than the *introduction* of it. But we will suppose the Magistrate's supremacy to be as anti-christian as this learned Prelate would represent it, and then apply his argument to one who was confessedly such an Instrument for the reformation of God's Church, I mean JEHU; to whom God himself speaks in this manner—"And the Lord said unto Jehu, "Because thou hast done well in executing that which "was right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the House "of Ahab *according to all that was in my heart.*"—2 Kings x. 30.—Here we have an *Instrument of God*, in all its forms. Let us put *him* then into the Bishop's argument, instead of Hen. VIII. and see how it will fadge. "If Jehu's destroying BAAL [the POPE] *out of Israel*, was a *divine work*; nothing could be *more divine* than his establishing the GOLDEN CALVES [the King's SUPREMACY] *in Bethel and in Dan.*" v. 28, 29. I leave it to the advocates of the Church of Rome to find out a distinction by which their Champion's argument will be made to conclude for *Jehu*'s Reformation, and at the same time, against that of Henry VIII.

motives nor manners suitable to the truth or purity of that *Gospel Faith* which they pretended to restore. We are so far from being ashamed of receiving benefit from men who supply these circumstances of reproach to themselves, that, supported by the general principle, arising from the Doctrines of these two Texts, as here reconciled and explained, we find, in the perversity of Man, new matter of *Glory to God.* And we bless the hand, which turned the Avarice of a furious Friar, and the luxury of a debauched Monarch, from their natural mischiefs, to become Instruments of the choicest blessings; the recovery of LETTERS and the restoration of RELIGION.

Indeed, it would be hard to conceive a reason, why this kind of Dispensation should not be esteemed as adorable in the religious government of the world, as it is in the moral; where we see, and without hesitation acknowledge, the goodness, the power, and the wisdom of God: whose Providence is incessantly employed in turning the crimes and passions of selfish men, to the advancement of public Justice. How many wholesome Laws have had their birth from the oblique views of interested *Ministers!* How many salutary inforcements of them from the blind passions of disappointed *Factions!*

Indeed, if we should so far mistake, or rather, abuse these blessings, as to turn our gratitude, or repose our trust, upon the Instruments, instead of the Sovereign Hand which guided them, Their vileness might then be fairly objected to us: But while

we are careful to give the honour where it is due, none of that just reproach, which may fall upon the Instrument, will at all affect the glorious work it was employed to produce *.

So

* Yet this sophism, miserable as it is, is the favourite argument both of SUPERSTITION and INFIDELITY: and constantly employed to discredit that Providence by which the work of *Reformation* was effected. The first step to the ruin of that unhappy Monarch, whose bigoted posterity has so often disturbed and endangered our civil peace, was the being perverted by this very delusion. *Father Orleans* tells the story from his own mouth:—Ce fut à Bruxelles au sortir de France qu'ayant assez de temps pour lire, il tomba sur l' Histoire d'*Heylin*. Il la lut avec attention, et au travers des divers pretextes dont les Protestants s'efforcent de colorer le schisme de leur pais, il reconnut evidemment que cette separation, si contraire à la maxime d'unité, qui est le fondement de l'Eglise, etoit en effet l'ouvrage des passions humaines; que l'*incontinence* d'Henri VIII., l'*ambition* du Duc de Somerset, la *politique* de la Reine Elizabeth, l'*avarice* de ceux qui d'abord s'etoient emparez des biens Ecclesiastiques, avoient été les principes de ce changement; que l'esprit de Dieu n'y avoit point de part. Il savoit que Dieu s'etoit servi de PROPHETES d'une vie sainte, pour être les chefs de son Peuple toutes les fois qu'il s'etoit agi de leur intimer ses volontez touchant la Religion; que dans le changement de Loi, des APOSTRES revêtus de la vertu d'enhaut, et plus semblables aux Anges qu'aux autres hommes, avoient annoncé l'Evangile; que *dans les relachemens* arrivez dans l'un et dans l'autre Testament, *ce n'etoient point des hommes charnels*, des ames vindicatives, des esprits ambiticux, qui avoient prêché la reforme, mais des *hommes pleins de l'esprit de Moyse*,

So far, as to the reasonableness of the caution against *false Prophets*. But now, as to the respect due to *immoral Ministers*, or the appointed Teachers of established Religion, who lie under the same imputation,

*Moyse, ou de celui de Jesus-Christ*, seuls canaux dignes de récevoir les eaux qui coulent de ses vives sources pour ne les point rendre suspectes de s'être corrompuës en venant à nous.—I hardly need stop to observe, that the sophistry and false reasoning of all this has been exposed above, in the *distinction*, laid down, between an *ordinary Instrument* and an *inspired Agent*.—He goes on—Des reflexions si raisonnables ouvrirent les yeux au Duc d'York: des lors il fut Catholique dans l'ame; et ce fut dans cette disposition d'esprit qu'au temps du retablissement il repassa en Angleterre——La Duchesse d'York, par un evenement remarquable, fut convertie en lisant le même Livre, qui avoit converti le Duc. Hist. des Revol. d'Angleterre, tom. iii.—What the *Priest* thus urges with the cunning of a Statesman, to discredit the Protestant Religion; the *Politician* employs with the zeal of a Missionary, to decry Revelation in general. "With "the same impartial eye (says Lord Bolingbroke to his "noble Friend), that your Lordship surveys the abuses "of Religion, and the corruptions of the Church, as "well as Court, of Rome, which brought on the *Refor-* "*mation* at this period; you will observe the *Characters* "and *Conduct* of those who began, who propagated, "and who favoured the *Reformation:* and from your "observation of these, as well as of the *unsystematical* "*manner* in which it was carried on, at the same time, in "various places, and of the want of concert, nay even "of *Charity*, amongst the Reformers, *you will learn* "*what to think of the several Religions*, that unite in their "opposition to the Roman, and yet hate one another "most

imputation, of discrediting their doctrine by their practice, we shall shew their case to be very different; and consequently that the different reception which my text directs us to afford them, is equally reasonable.

*Whatsoever* (says the text) *they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do you not after their Works: for they say, and do not.* That is, "As they are appointed to dispense unto you the doctrines and precepts of Religion, and to support and inforce them, with all the power of their wit and eloquence, attend to them, as to a public Character, with reverence; but shun their ways, and forbear to imitate their practice, which stands condemned by their own contrary professions. In a word, receive them for your *Instructors*; but beware of taking them for your *Examples*."

The fitness and reasonableness of this direction may be seen, both from the NECESSITY and the NATURE of the office.

1. We learn from the experience of all ages, that, to preserve Religion amongst the people, there is need of public teachers, to be set apart for that purpose. Thus in the *Jewish state* they were appointed by God's particular direction: amongst the policied nations of *Paganism*, by the civil magistrate:

"most heartily; *what to think of the* several sects, that "have sprouted, like suckers, from the same great Roots; "and *what the true principles are of Protestant Eccle-* "*siastical Policy.*"—L. Bolingbroke, Letter VI. *of the Study of History*, Vol. i. pp. 209, 210.

magistrate: and wherever *our holy Religion* hath got footing, both divine and human authority have concurred to their establishment. The office therefore of the Ministers of a national Religion, like ours, is to support and cultivate that *Revelation*, which the first Messengers of it, by their extraordinary graces, had planted and disseminated throughout the world. For its divinity being *once* thus powerfully evinced, all that remained for the constant exercise of the ministry, was to have the *exterior* evidence of its *truth*, and the *interior* evidence of its *excellence*, set in the fairest and most convincing light. And as this might be done by the common aids of *reason* and *grace*, the power of *miracles*, as no longer necessary, was withdrawn from the Teachers of Religion. So that it was now no matter of wonder, though it will always be of scandal, if men, equally subject with their hearers to the common infirmities of their nature, should, in more degenerate times, fall under the same vassallage to sin and corruption. However, that this will not excuse their hearers from rejecting their ministry, and disregarding their doctrine, appears plainly from the second consideration, the *nature* of their office.

2. Whoever assumes to instruct and direct the People, upon the footing of his own authority, hath need to be irreproachable in his life and conversation; because the truth of what he delivers rests upon the integrity of his character. Fraudulent and corrupt manners very justly discredit all he would recommend. And, though his prevarication cannot alter

alter the nature of things, yet it seems to acquit his hearers for their neglect of him; and for declining to examine what he delivers on his own personal authority. This was the case of the ancient PHILOSOPHERS. While the first of them practised the virtues suitable to their name and title, they were treated with regard and reverence. But when, in after-times, they became as notorious for their immoralities, they deservedly sunk into general neglect. The First Christian apologists urge their vices home upon them; and consider the popular contempt into which they were fallen as the natural consequence of their profligate manners: For even uncultivated reason tells us, that it is absurd to expect *grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.*

But a *Minister of established Religion* stands upon another footing. He delivers nothing on his own Authority. His office is to inforce God's *established* Truth by argument and persuasion. The Guide he recommends is not HIMSELF, but HOLY SCRIPTURE; which he invites all men diligently to study and examine. And if, in aid of his general office, he maketh one part of his ministry to consist in *interpreting* what he thinks may *minister grace to the hearers*, it is but to assist them in their Knowledge of God's Word: and to weigh the force of what he offers, in behalf of its Authority. Now what have the private morals of such a Character further to do in this matter, than to excite the compassion of every charitable hearer? who cannot but lament that so much science, and application to holy things, as is necessary to fit him for the discharge

charge of his employment, should not have force enough to subdue his evil habits.

But if on this account we do unreasonably, to set at nought a Minister of Christ; how absurd is it to encourage or excuse ourselves in our vices, by his bad example. We reject the authority he has from God, we resist the evidence he draws from Reason, yet seem to respect, in him, the works of the flesh and the tyranny of enslaving Passions.

But, of all the delusions into which licentious men are apt to fall, the most unhappy sure is that, which, from the vices and imperfections of the *ministers of the Gospel*, inclines them to reject, or entertain suspicions of, that *Religion itself*, they are intrusted to teach: And yet I believe nothing has more contributed to keep men attached to their infidelity, than this foolish prejudice.

Did the Gospel deliver, or was it suspected to deliver, any doctrines even of the remotest tendency to encourage its Ministers in their vices, much might be said for this strange conclusion. But when it is by those very doctrines that the People discover the true nature and enormity of vice; when it is by those doctrines they hear the Preacher condemned out of their own mouths; it seems strangely perverse to think amiss of Religion on that account. Surely these men of reason have not brought themselves to expect, that, in the ordinary course of God's providence, a mere knowledge of his Will, and of the truths arising from it, should have a resistless force to bear down inveterate habits, and subdue the strongest bent of human inclination.

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In conclusion, I have only one caution to subjoin, That what is here said of the prejudices and perversities of the *Hearers of the Word*, be not mistaken, as intended for an excuse of the immoral *Preachers* of it. Their guilt admits of none. Against them, under the names of the *Scribes and Pharisees* of my text, Jesus, in the same place where he vindicates their public character from contempt, hath denounced the severest woe of offended Heaven. *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, How can you escape the damnation of Hell?* But when he speaks still more directly to the *Ministers of his own Religion*, his condemnation goes still higher. *It is impossible* (says he to his Disciples) *but that offences will come; but woe unto him through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these litte ones* *. The *woe* denounced against the *Ministers of the Mosaic Law* was for offences arising from enormous crimes: But this, against the *Ministers of the Gospel*, is, for offences, occasioned even by indiscretions. *Whoever* (says he) *shall offend one of these little ones:* and this, with the highest reason, both on account of the superior holiness of the Gospel, and the superior charity required of its Followers.

In a word, the Crime of a profligate life, in the *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, is aggravated by many considerations.

* Matt. xviii. 6.

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The acquired knowledge, necessary for the ordinary discharge of their office, gives them advantages, in religious wisdom, above other men: So that if their progress in virtue be not proportionable to their superior knowledge of its nature and effects, they become very guilty before God; who, by the mouth of his Son, has assured us, that *to whom much is given, from him much will be required* *.

Their solemn dedication and separation to the service of Religion, likewise demands a more especial sanctity of manners. The very Heathens saw, that such as were employed about holy things, ought to be endowed with, or at least should learn to acquire, a higher degree of purity, than those who stood further from the altar: And accordingly public authority exacted from them the observance of a stricter and severer rule of moral conduct.

The sum of all is this, That the *Hearer* should not entertain prejudices against Religion, on account of the bad life of the *Preacher:* Nor, on the other hand, should the *Clergy* suffer these unjust prejudices of the *Laity* to abate their horror for a faithless discharge of their Trust. Let them equally concur in confessing the divine original of VIRTUE and RELIGION, in the midst of all their abuses of both; let them concur to give Glory to God, while each lies humbled under the deep sense of his own condemnation.

* Luke xii. 48

# SERMON XI.

## OF CHURCH COMMUNION.

LUKE ix. 49, 50.

AND JOHN ANSWERED AND SAID, MASTER, WE SAW ONE CASTING OUT DEVILS IN THY NAME; AND WE FORBAD HIM, BECAUSE HE FOLLOWETH NOT WITH US. AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, FORBID HIM NOT: FOR HE THAT IS NOT AGAINST US, IS FOR US.

WHEN Jesus, in the entrance on his Ministry, had thought fit to confirm the truth of his Gospel, by the EVIDENCE OF MIRACLES, he was graciously pleased to contrive, that that which was the credential of his Mission should, at the same time, minister relief and consolation to the *bodily* infirmities of those, whose *spiritual* disorders he was sent to heal. On this account, as well as to give additional lustre to his Character, he communicated of this divine power to his Followers.

But these gross and carnal-minded men considered their gifts and graces, not as a *trust* imparted to them for the benefit of others; but as a *prerogative* given them in proper to adorn their own personal

characters. So that, on seeing a man dispensing the same blessings, though in the name of their common Master, yet because he *followed not with them*, they forbad him the exercise of his ministerial function; as if they themselves had been erected into a Society or Company, with the privilege of an exclusive trade: And, with great satisfaction in this their conduct, they acquaint their heavenly Master with the silence they had imposed upon this presuming Schismatic. But they were surprised at their reception, when, instead of applause, they were received with this cold admonition, *Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us.* Yet they would have seen reason to be thankful for the moderation and gentleness of the reproof, had they reflected on the absurdity, as well as iniquity, of their behaviour. For it was but just before * that these very men, who now restrained a *Follower of Christ* from exercising the virtue communicated to him, because he was not of their *Society*, had themselves essayed the very same power, and, through the deficiency of their faith, had essayed it in vain. So that we may reasonably conclude, there was in this *first* exertion of uncharitable restraint, what has been found in it ever since; not a little envy mingled with a great deal of zeal.

Yet as carnal as this temper is, and as seasonably as it was reproved, it has rarely failed to shew itself in every age, and almost in every country, to stop the progress of the Gospel, and narrow the *Communion of Saints.*

* Ver. 40.

And

And here, as in all other cases, where the genius of our holy Faith is violated, a text was at hand, to flatter their prejudices, and support them in their delusions. For St. Matthew * tells us, that Jesus, on a certain occasion, delivered himself in the following manner, HE THAT IS NOT WITH ME IS AGAINST ME. A declaration so opposite to the former, that it will require to have the two texts accorded, before we can draw any certain conclusion from either of them.

It is to be observed, then, that these different propositions are delivered by Jesus at very different junctures: so that we may presume they were directed to different objects; and may therefore be well reconciled, and made to stand quietly together. This is indeed the case; they bear a very friendly aspect towards each other.

The words of my text were occasioned by the disciples forbidding a man the exercise of his ministry, though he professed his faith in Jesus, because he conformed not to the discipline of the *Twelve*. But the words in St. Matthew were directed to another sort of men, his enemies, the *Pharisees*; who, when they were convinced of the truth of his miracles, were yet so prejudiced against his mission, that they affected to believe, *he cast out Devils by Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils.* The absurdity of which impious subterfuge, when Jesus had exposed as it deserved, he subjoined this general truth, *He that is not with me is against me.*

Here we see it is the dissenting from the FAITH

* Ch. xii. 30.

OF JESUS, not from the DISCIPLINE OF A CHURCH denominated from him, which deprives the Dissentient of any share in him. And, indeed, as it would seem to violate the strong Benevolence of our holy Religion, to debar the faithful of their claim to its benefits, on account of their separating from, or rather not associating with, some of its professors, in Church-fellowship; so it would apparently dishonour its dignity, and defeat its peculiar virtue, to imagine that the opposers of it had a right to its privileges, on this only title, that they stood upon the common foundation of the *moral Law.*

These two texts, therefore, do not only agree well together, but do indeed imply the truth of one another. For if the benefits be so great, and so necessary to humanity, it is not fit they should depend on so precarious a ground, as this or that *mode of discipline:* And if it be the proper virtue of Christianity, to bestow them, it would not be just that any other mode of belief should share in the honour of conveying them.

These reciprocal Truths, likewise, have a commodious application: and we may properly oppose them to those two extremes; one of which is apt to bewilder the zealots for the *national Religion*; the other, the lukewarm professors of *Christianity at large:* While one side supposeth, there is no Salvation out of the *pale of his own Church*; and the other, that there is no happiness which *moral virtue alone* is not able to procure.

These errors are equally hurtful to true Religion. But the former only is my present subject: It is that

that which my text condemns. How justly, we shall now see.

This narrow, intolerant Spirit, which excludes from the benefits of the Gospel, all without the national or established pale, notwithstanding their profession of the common faith of Jesus, is alike injurious to GOD and MAN.

I. For first, it alters the TERMS OF SALVATION, as they are delivered in the Gospel; which are, *Faith in Christ, and repentance towards God*; by adding others to them, such as *fellow-membership in Church Communion*. To change the fundamental Laws of Christ's spiritual Kingdom, where he is the only Lawgiver, is an offence of the highest nature, as not only implying simple disobedience, but usurpation likewise. A Church acting with this Spirit, not only throws off Subjection, but assumes the Sovereignty: And is no longer the Sheep-fold of the good Shepherd, but the den of Anti-Christ, the Thief and Robber.

Again, This innovation is opposite to the doctrine of REDEMPTION, and foreign to the whole genius of the Gospel. They were not the sins of men, as they make collective bodies in Communities, but the sins of each individual of our common species, for which Christ died. The descendants of *Adam* had, through his transgression, lost the free gift of immortality; which was as freely restored by the death and sufferings of Christ. But to whom was it restored? not to collective bodies, who should worship this Restorer with public Rites and Cere-

monies; but to every particular man who had a *lively faith* in him. The Gospel is the publication of the *glad tidings* of this restoration: And though indeed it was first addressed to the Jews, as a NATION, a Church, or Society; yet this was not because the redemption of Mankind had any thing to do with Societies of Men as such; but because the *Race of Abraham*, from whose loins the promised Redeemer was to spring, had been, by God's special appointment, collected into a Body, as amongst other uses, so for this, the better to prepare his way, and to mark his predicted original according to the flesh. But when the Gentiles had in their turn the Gospel offered unto them, the address was only to PARTICULARS. For though the terms of Salvation respected the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, yet the *Roman Senate*, as such, had no concern in them. And those *particulars* who received the word, became not necessarily, from the simple nature and genius of the Faith, members of any Community, but of the spiritual Kingdom of God. And though for the better conveyance of the glad tidings of the Gospel, it was expedient that the Disciples of Christ should be formed into a kind of Sodality, yet the Founder of our holy Faith never intended this, or any other religious Society, to be part of its essentials; as appears from his express words in my text, where he receives one, who was propagating the faith in him, to all the benefits and prerogatives of his Religion, though he was out of the pale of that fraternity he had just then instituted.

Now what Jesus himself did, in this establishment,

ment, for the propagation of Religion, was done afterwards by his Apostles, in imitation of him, for the support and continuance of it. They erected Churches and Societies wherever they came: which being founded in one common Faith, were in Communion with one another, as the various parts and members of the spiritual Kingdom of God; but, at the same time, no more essential to that Faith than their own sodality founded by their Master.

Nay, for the very reasons of establishing the Churches, namely the conveyance and security of Religion, it appears they could not be essential to the Faith; nothing more obstructing its progress than the notion of a Society's being essential to it, as the consequence of that is the confining Salvation to some one Church or Communion.

From all this it appears, that a principle, which narrows the communion of Saints, is contrary to the doctrine of Redemption, and foreign to the genius of the Gospel. Such are the dishonours this notion brings upon Revelation.

II. Humanity is not less injured by it. For first it turns the free gift of God into a bartering trade; the liberty of the Gospel into a spiritual tyranny. For when once it is believed, that there is no salvation out of a particular Church, and that the admission into it, and exclusion from it, are at the disposal of a certain order of men, the persons and fortunes of the faithful will lie at the mercy of

their Ministers. And it will require a very uncommon share of Grace and Virtue not to abuse so dangerous a privilege; and to restrain avarice and ambition from prostituting the sacred ordinances of Religion to lucrative and secular purposes.

Of this we see a sad example in the CHURCH OF ROME: who, from the principle of no salvation out of its own Community, at length brought men to believe, that salvation depended on the Clergy's duly administering the sacraments, and other offices of Religion. From hence arose all the mercantile traffic of Indulgences, and the whole political machine of Excommunication. And by this means the CHURCH, that is, the CLERGY, got themselves possessed of all the power, and almost all the wealth, of the Christian World.

Secondly, Religious Societies formed by divine appointment to spread and to support the FAITH, and, together with it, the great principle of universal BENEVOLENCE, became, through the bigotry of this error, the very bane of *benevolence*; by exasperating every Church or Society against another, for its exclusive pretensions; and by stirring up reciprocal hate and aversion to one another, from the supposed state of reprobation in which they all lie amongst themselves; till the whole Church militant, instead of directing its warfare against their spiritual enemies, turns its arms upon itself: and dividing into separate bands and parties, each damns and curses, smites and persecutes the other, who appears with marks and badges different from his own.

own. For persecution naturally follows unchurching and reprobation. And Zeal is never at ease till it hath completed the system of desolation.

This may be seen from the conduct of the very men in my text, amongst whom this evil first appeared; for the Story informs us that their next exploit, after silencing this bold Separatist, was the calling down fire from heaven on the heretical Samaritans *. A circumstance recorded by the Holy Spirit to instruct us, how easy a step it is, from INTERDICTION, to the SECULAR ARM.

These are some of the mischiefs which arise from the wretched bigotry of confining salvation, and the benefits of Christ's death and passion, to one Church or Society; forgetful of that just reproof which so seasonably curbed this spirit in its birth, *Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us.*

But falsehood is never so effectually exposed as when it is traced and laid open to its original. Let us follow this error then to its source.

The nature of things require, that men professing a *Religion* should form themselves into a *Society*, in order to support that profession. On this principle it was that *Moses* and *Jesus*, the Authors, under God, of a revealed Religion, positively instituted that Society which the nature of things virtually prescribed: But with this difference; the Mosaic Religion being temporary, the rudiments of one more complete, and given, in the interim, only to a single family or people, in order to keep them separate from the rest of mankind, it needed such a pe-

* Luke ix. 54, 55.

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culiar Ritual, as should give it a PUBLIC as well as a PRIVATE part; and make the *house of Israel*, as well as each *individual* of it, the subject of Religion. In this case, the *religious society* was *essential* to the Religion, and composed a Church of one denomination; out of whose pale no man could be intitled to its benefits.

But Jesus, as the Author of an *universal* Religion, though rising on the foundations of the *Mosaic*, had only the general reason for forming his disciples into a Society, namely, for the better security of the Faith; consequently, the *Society* made *no essential* part of his Religion; nor needed a Church of one denomination, within which the benefits of it should be confined.

Yet, so it happened, that the Rulers and Governors of this Church, which as we say, arose out of Judaism, did not rightly consider *what Spirit they were of* *, nor sufficiently advert to the reasons, on which that peculiarity, in Judaism, was founded; and so transferred it into *Christianity*, as they had unwarily done many others, to its irreparable damage and dishonour.

What hath been here said is sufficient to unmask that vile imposture obtruded on the early Christian Church, called the APOSTOLICAL CONSTITUTIONS. The Forger of which apparently went on this false principle, that some one individual Society was as essential to *Christianity* as it had been to *Judaism:* so that a system of Laws, equivalent to the Ritual of *Moses*, was as necessary in one Religion as in

* Luke ix. 55.

the

the other: to supply this want, the honest man, whoever he was, set upon his worthy labour. And in all probability foresaw, that his forgery would neither want advocates nor arguments, such as they were, to keep it in credit. We have seen of these: and the amount of their reasoning comes to this, "that if the *Constitutions* be not genuine, the Apostles made no Laws for the government of Christ's Church; which would sink its dignity below the Mosaic." They were not aware, that this imaginary advantage did not arise from the perfection, but the imperfection of the Jewish Religion.

But now let me not be misunderstood, as if from all this I would infer, that it were indifferent, in what Church or Society we profess our Faith in Christ. Some Churches, we know, have become so corrupt as to endanger the salvation of those who continue in them, and, on this principle, amongst others, we separated from the CHURCH OF ROME. Well would it have been, had the first Separatists kept entire, and not split and divided themselves into different Sects. But since Providence decreed otherwise, their posterity had yet a task behind; and this was, to chuse amongst the several Churches erected on Reformation Principles, that which came nearest to the purity of the Gospel. For with some or other, the Genius of our holy Religion, and the condition of mankind, require that we should join.

The choice too should be made with the utmost precaution. For amongst the various Societies of *Christians*, there are some, in which the holy *Ordinances*

*dinances* are more regularly administered; *Discipline* more equitably inforced; and Christian *Liberty* more watchfully protected. Now all these circumstances tending to forward the true Believer in the way of his Salvation, it is of much importance to him to chuse his fellow-membership in that Church, which is most exactly dressed on the model of primitive rectitude and simplicity.

Thus, we see, there is a wide difference between declining to join in Communion with this or that Church here, and excluding them from the *Communion of Saints* hereafter. Nothing can justify the latter. Whereas prudence, integrity, and common justice, frequently require us to keep separate from a Church of this or that denomination, when by joining in communion with it we subject ourselves to unprofitable, difficult, or dangerous ordinances; when it imposeth on us what we may think sinful or unjust; or, lastly, when it hath contracted that enormous stain and pollution here condemned, *the denying salvation to all out of its own pale.*

My purpose, in this discourse, was only to expose the vain opinion of inherent sanctity, or superiority, or exclusive privilege in one Church above another, merely because founded by a *Paul*, a *Peter*, an *Andrew*, or a *James:* or merely because administered by an Hierarchy, by an equal Ministry, or a moderate Episcopacy. Because such opinions have produced, and do still support, that wretched spirit, which here, on the Authority of God's Word, I have endeavoured to discredit, and ventured to condemn

condemn: confiding in the Oracle of eternal Truth, *that he that is not against us, is for us*; and will be treated by our heavenly Master, not as a Rebel, but a Subject; and therefore should be now considered by Us, as he will then be by Him, who is the common Judge of us both.

# SERMON XII.

## OF CHURCH COMMUNION.

EPHES. iv. 1, 3.

I BESEECH YOU, THAT YE WALK WORTHY OF THE VOCATION WHEREWITH YE ARE CALLED —ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.

THE nature and genius of the Christian Religion annexes the rewards of the Gospel-covenant to a *System* of FAITH or belief: and, at the same time, requires and encourages examination into the truth and reasonableness of such a System. From the first circumstance arises the discredit, from the other the danger, of difference in opinion; whether that difference respects the *truth*, or only the *importance* of doctrines supposed to belong to the integrity of the Christian Faith. And on this discredit, and on this danger, is founded the admonition of my text, *to endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit*.

By these *endeavours*, the welfare of Religion, and especially of the Christian, is best consulted. For,

The flourishing condition of every system of things,

things, whether *spiritual* or *civil*, consists in their being *kept* in a state of Peace and Honour.

Concord and uniformity in opinions, after a careful examination of their truth, does, in a supreme degree, secure the peace of the Church, and advance the honour of Religion; as will be seen by considering, what it is that most disturbs and disgraces both.

Unreasonable fondness for our own notions, and mistaken zeal for God's glory, make us eager to bring others over to our opinions. And in proportion to the fancied importance of the doctrines, and to the wideness of the difference, will be our endeavours to prevail; and at the same time, our resentment at their opposition.

Diversity of religious opinions, therefore, must needs produce suspicions very opposite to social peace; such as perversity of will, corruption of heart, and, what seems less uncharitable, but is yet more hardly endured, a narrowness of mind and sentiment. These soon proceed to open censures, and mutual bickerings; till at last each party regards all that differ from them as the enemies of God, and unworthy of their benevolence and love.

Nor is difference of opinion less injurious to the honour of our holy Religion, than obnoxious to the peace of the Church.

One would naturally expect, that the fundamental doctrines of a Religion delivered as the final completion of all God's preceding revelations, and intended for universal use, should be precise and clear; agreeable to the most obvious reason,

and conformable to the plainest truth. To find, then, disputes and differences concerning Doctrines deemed to be essential, must needs have an ill effect on the popular reputation of Religion; and afford its enemies a handle (which the sanctity of its precepts will always make them very ready to lay hold on) to bring in question the divinity of its original. They will say, "That the mark of a divine truth is the fulness of its evidence; which is a *necessary* quality of truths proposed for general belief, and inforced by religious sanctions, both on account of the importance of the truths themselves, and the incapacity of the people to comprehend any but the most obvious. Yet the endless disputes concerning fundamentals seem to shew, that such pretended truths want this necessary degree of evidence: and so cannot have the original which they pretend to."

Such are the objections of men, who are always ready to take offence as they are to give it, by throwing stumbling-blocks in the way of the weak and captious. And though the force of these cavils be but small; yet the evil arising from the occasion is very great.

Having thus shewn the importance of *endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit*; the next is to propose direction for its better observance; 1. By explaining how it became violated: and 2. How it may be restored to its integrity.

The genius of Christianity, as well as the repeated declarations of its Founder, concur in as-

suring us, *That it is by* FAITH ALONE *we are justified, or intitled to the rewards of the Covenant of Grace.* Hence some men, who held this truth in its greatest simplicity, thought they never could have enough: and so, instead of stopping at the few general and fundamental Principles of Christian faith, clearly delivered, and uniformly believed by all, they went on, and brought into the Church, as terms of Communion, abstruse questions relating to points obscurely delivered; and made still more doubtful by having the Principles of the Greek Philosophy, to which the *sacred Writers* paid no regard, and with which the *Faith* hath no concern, applied to their solution. They did not consider, that the very obscurity itself sufficiently declared that they never were proposed by the gracious Author of our Faith, for fundamental articles; nor consequently that he ever intended the profession of them as the necessary condition of Church Communion. Much less had this imaginary defect in the all-perfect *word of God* given any scandal, had it been considered, that the proper aim and business of the Founder of an universal Religion must needs be, to represent the divine Being under the idea of the MORAL GOVERNOR of the World, without any further explanation of his metaphysical Nature than so far forth as it tended to promote the moral purpose of Religion.

Now the violation of the *unity of the Spirit* having been occasioned by these mistakes, we may easily collect that the means of preserving it entire had been the requiring no more, as the terms of Church Communion, than what Christ hath delivered

to

to be explicitly believed: and these not consisting of many particulars, and all of them clear and simple, had afforded no handle for difference or diversity of Opinions: especially had due care been taken to express, as much as possible, those points of Communion, in scripture terms, without running out into modern glosses, conceived upon the principles of Science and Philosophy merely human; on which, as we said, the divine wisdom of holy Scripture has neither relation nor dependence.

These had been the most direct and efficacious means, I know of, for preserving the *unity of the Spirit:* Always supposing that previous disposition of HUMILITY and CHARITY, which all parties confess to be necessary for the union of opinions, as well as of hearts and affections.

But since, through a neglect of these rules, this unity of the Spirit hath been unhappily violated, the next question is of RESTORING it. Which what is here said concerning the means of its preservation shews us is to be done.

1. By retrenching all unnecessary articles, to which the animosity of parties, the superstition of barbarous ages, and even the negligence of time, have given an imaginary importance: and by reducing the formula of Faith to the primitive simplicity: Leaving all disputable points, together with such other as no party deems necessary, to the free decision of every man's private judgment: whereby the terms of Church Communion will be made as wide as is consistent with the welfare and good government of a SOCIETY.

2. As divisions, long kept up, have inflamed the passions, strengthened the prejudices, and biassed the judgments of the contending Parties; another, and indeed principal means of restoring unity, is the mutual compliance with one another's weaknesses. And this, methinks, would not be difficult amongst well-disposed men, as we must needs esteem those to be, who seek to regain this *unity of the Spirit*: For though these long contentions may have made us blind to our own infirmities, yet they have rather sharpened our sight towards those of our adversaries. So that a general weakness being mutually seen and pitied, the very passions raised by our differences may be naturally brought to promote our reconcilement.

But notwithstanding this apparent ease in bearing with one another's weaknesses, it deserves a more than ordinary care to put the disposition in practice; as Ecclesiastics of all denominations are but too apt to reason wrong in applying it to their mutual endeavours for reconciliation. "The demands of our adversaries, say the established party, are for matters owned by themselves to be no duties; and against others they confess to be indifferent: why then should we alter the stated order of things to comply with their perverseness or imbecility?" But those who reason thus seem not to consider that they themselves become guilty of the very miscarriage of which they accuse, and rightly accuse, their Adversaries. For if the thing in question be of matters indifferent, why are they not complied with, for the sake of so great a blessing as the *unity of the Spirit*, how

how foolishly or obstinately soever demanded? Allow them to be weak or wilful for insisting on indifferent things as the terms of fellow-membership in Church Communion; Do we shew less of this imbecility in refusing to comply with them in these indifferences? which, because they are so, we pretend our opposites should not be indulged in. For wherein consists their fault or folly but in treating indifferent points as *Duties* by an obstinate demand of them? And wherein consists our wisdom, but in treating indifferent points as *Sins* by as obstinate a refusal? Now when this mutual miscarriage hath defeated, as it often hath done, the repeated endeavours of good men on all sides to restore the violated *unity of the Spirit*, each Party may reasonably blame the conduct of the other, but it is impossible he can justify his own. Indeed it would be hard to say who are most to blame; Those who oppose established authority for the imposition of matters indifferent; or that Authority which rigidly insists on them, and will abate nothing for the sake of tender uninformed Consciences: I say it would be hard to resolve this, had not the holy Apostle done it for us, where he says, *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and* NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES*. *I myself*, says he, *do so, and all for the Gospel's sake.* This is the man who tells us *he had fought a good fight and overcome.* And we may believe him; for, in this contention, the Party that submits is always Conqueror.

* Rom. xv. 1.

But now, though the UNITY OF THE SPIRIT cannot be purchased at too high a price, yet UNIFORMITY of established worship may be bought too dear. Here then, in pursuit of this spiritual blessing we must stop; and not venture to go one step further: We must not dare to procure it either at the expence of TRUTH or JUSTICE. It must be now left to the good care of Providence. And this, as we shall see next, is implied in the very words which direct us to attempt it.

1. It is the *unity of the* SPIRIT which the Apostle recommends to us, to keep and preserve. But if, for the sake of *uniformity of* WORSHIP, we disguise, or betray, or give up any fundamental Truth, it becomes a *confederacy* of the *Spirit of this World:* at best a politic Union for the preservation of civil peace: A peace, where Religion is not the actuating principle, but only the cloke and cover.

2. Nor again, was this *unity of the Spirit* preserved (so long as it was preserved), nor is it to be again recovered, by restraint or CIVIL-COERCION. This would be violating that *bond of peace,* in which the Apostle tells us, the *unity of the Spirit* is to be kept. For *force upon the Conscience* being a violation of man's natural rights, it will be always resented accordingly. Hence it is that Persecution for Religion necessarily tears asunder all the bonds of Peace and Charity; and reduces the Church of Christ to that distracted condition which our blessed Master described when he foretold the miseries that would arise from Persecution. *The Father* (says he) *shall*

*be*

*be divided against the Son, and the Son against the Father; the Mother against the Daughter, and the Daughter against the Mother. And a man's foes shall be those of his own house.*

When therefore those *means* spoken of above, have, through the early folly or later perversity of man, proved ineffectual to preserve or to restore the *unity of the Spirit*, the only remaining care to which we should then turn us, is the keeping fast the BOND OF PEACE.

Now the only means of securing this, as experience hath fully shewn us, is by a general TOLERATION, or full Liberty to all Christian sects (who give security for their good behaviour to the civil Government) of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own Consciences, without let or molestation from the ESTABLISHED RELIGION.

Under this wise and well-regulated provision, when the blessing of *unity of Spirit* cannot be obtained, the Church of Christ may be still enabled to enjoy all the benefits which arise from the *bond of Peace*. So that though men will not be persuaded to go all one way to Heaven, yet it is to be hoped, when no human impediment is laid across the road, that good men of all parties may get thither at last; though some with more, and others with less difficulty.

The distractions and iniquities of these latter ages give us no reasonable grounds to hope for a better condition of the Church. It is therefore that which reasonable men would aim at. It is that which our own Church enjoys. Here we sought our peace: and here happily we have found it: The experience of

a course of years having discovered that it is productive of much good, and preventive of many evils.

But the restless mind of man, rarely at ease with the present state of things, and still impatient for a better, has ever, as opportunities served, been assuming various projects, of visionary improvements, but all really tending to defeat or disturb this well-ordered regulation.

The most plausible, yet as visionary as any, is that called a COMPREHENSION. A word very expressive to distinguish the Thing, from that *Unity of the Spirit*; and even from that *Uniformity*, spoken of above. An *Unity* is the agreement in heart of those who aim at the same thing though by different ways; an *Uniformity* exacts a profession of the same thing by the same way; but a *Comprehension* would be for tacking together different things and different ways, even under the existing difference of profession. The first is brotherly-concord; the second is Church-communion: but the last is political combination. Nor is the Scheme less impracticable than it is mischievous; as may be seen from the following considerations.

1. This project hath of late been conceived by men who agreed in nothing but in a dissatisfaction with the present order of things. For one side having been unjustly prejudiced against the equity of a TOLERATION; and the other, as unjustly, against the rights of an ESTABLISHMENT; they readily concurred in a *Comprehension*, that seemed to supersede the use of both. But we needed not the gift of prophecy to foresee that it would come to nothing;

nothing; since the very thing which so naturally brought the confederates together, would, when they understand one another, as naturally separate them; namely, the profession of inconsistent Principles: and if not so; yet their Principles being at the same time *equally false*, it would make their staying together ineffectual: For what could a mutual falsehood produce but an impracticable absurdity. And well perhaps is it for Religion that it always does so. For this *Comprehension*, the ape, and mimic of *Unity*, tends to the *destruction* of that spiritual SOCIETY, which *Unity* strengthens and supports.

2. The Projectors of it are generally private men, who undertake for more than they can perform. For it is not the temper of *Societies* to come into what is promised in their names, by men uncommissioned to act for them.

3. The main end of a *Comprehension* being PEACE; indeed the only end that could induce the Magistrate to engage in such a business; and the Community being already in posession of this blessing by a well-ordered *Toleration*; He will, I suppose, be very hardly persuaded to exchange an experienced good in possession, for one untried; which, though it appear fair in prospect, yet the road to it may prove difficult and dangerous.

4. It hath been often essayed in vain by the worthiest and wisest men of their times, such as CASSANDER and GROTIUS. And it is no wonder this fancied *Magisterium* should still evaporate in the *projection*. For either the *Comprehension* must

must be so large and loose as to dissolve all Church Government, and even Religious Society: Or, if it be so tempered as to keep these subsisting, there will be need of all the regulations which distinguish and separate things *tolerated* from things *established*; and then *Comprehension* will shrink back again into an empty name.

On the whole, Since the Church of Christ hath been so unhappy as to be deprived of its greatest blessing, the UNITY OF THE SPIRIT, let not the same, or even contrary follies, be of force to persuade such who are sensible of the loss, to try conclusions with what yet remains, the next best good of Society, THE BOND OF PEACE; but rather let them be content to preserve what we still possess, by such sober means as the genius and disposition of the times will permit us to employ. These we have long experienced to be abundantly sufficient. So that those who wish well either to the ESTABLISHED, or to the TOLERATED, Societies of Christians, have nothing to do but to prevent the exercise of their distinct powers from degenerating: This, indeed, might at last provoke the MAGISTRATE to lend an unwilling ear to the ignorant and destructive schemes of these vain and idle Visionaries: But till then, I suppose, Sober Churchmen, and experienced Ministers of State, will have this mutual confidence in one another, that neither the Church will abuse its privileges, nor the State leave it unprotected.

# SERMON XIII.

## THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNING ON REVELATION.

LUKE xviii. 8.

—WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH, SHALL HE FIND FAITH ON THE EARTH?

THIS is one of those fatal MARKS expressive of the latter fortunes of the Christian Church, as foretold, in the sacred Writings, amongst the Signs of the second coming of the *Son of man.* And with This, many other of those signs now concurring, seem, in the opinion of serious men, to point out to us the near approach of that awful period; the completion of the *moral*, and the renovation of the *natural* system of things.

But the labour of the Christian Divine will be perhaps better employed in searching out the natural causes of the rising disorders in the Church of Christ, than in hazardous conjectures about Futurity; although laid open to him in some measure by the import of those *marks*, which the predicted evils are supposed to bear.

And indeed, if He have not this discretion, his speculations will sometimes, as in the case before

us,

us, be rudely called off from the Prophetic matter, to other considerations, in which the honour of *Christianity* is more immediately concerned.

A late noble Writer *, who, together with the Religion of his Country, hath attempted to erase from the minds of men the very idea of all that goes under the name of Religion, hath, amongst his discoveries of the FIRST PHILOSOPHY, laid down the following maxim: "That since the revival of learning in the West, and the consequent practice of thinking for ourselves, the CHRISTIAN FAITH hath kept gradually decaying; and men have given less and less credit to its pretensions †." From hence he would infer, and not illogically on such a gratuitous Principle, "that the Religion of *Jesus* is false."

I propose therefore to debate this matter with him; a point of the utmost importance to the honour of Revelation.

His Lordship's proposition may be expressed in plainer terms, "That the more the world has advanced in real knowledge, the more it has discovered of the untenable pretensions of the Gospel."

To expose the futility of his maxim, I shall first of all shew, that it was not IGNORANCE which

* Lord BOLINGBROKE.

† *The resurrection of Letters was a fatal period: the Christian system has been attacked, and wounded too, very severely since that time*—And again, *Christianity has been in decay ever since the resurrection of Letters.*—Lord BOLINGBROKE, on the study and use of history, Vol. III. pp. 430, 31. Octavo Edition.

gave

gave the Gospel its early credit: Which is a presumption, at least, that KNOWLEDGE hath not since hurt it.

Now CHRISTIANITY arose when KNOWLEDGE was at its height, in the latter part of the *Augustan* age; and in the very centre of human learning, *Rome*, *Greece*, and the *Lesser-Asia*. Neither was it propagated in confederacy with Sophists or Philosophers; but in direct defiance of all their eloquence and reasoning; over which, after a sharp conflict of FAIR ARGUMENT, it at length completely triumphed: Nor, again, under the protection of civil Rulers, or the Imperial authority; for these were all combined to its destruction; some with the arms of human learning and Philosophy, as MARCUS ANTONINUS and JULIAN: but the far greater part with the more peculiar argument of Tyrants, the sword of the executioner: Yet these, likewise, the Gospel, after a still sharper conflict of PATIENCE and SUFFERING, brought over to the side of Truth and Reason.

But what need we more? We have the noble Author himself giving testimony to the fact; and, in his *usual way*, destroying his own system of political philosophy. He not only confesseth, that at the publication of the Gospel, the Gentile World was highly advanced in knowledge, but that this knowledge facilitated the reception of its truths. Speaking of this very æra, he says—"Polytheism was "mitigated; Idolatry was in good measure dis-"tinguished away, amongst the Philosophers at "least. Oracles and the Arts of Divination grew into "contempt:

" contempt: and if Heathenism was kept up by men " above the vulgar, it seemed to be so only by the " Priests for lucre, and by others for fear of having " no Religion at all. THUS THE WAY WAS PRE- " PARED BY REASON FOR REVELATION, in the " *Countries where Christianity first appeared, and* " *which were enlightened by Philosophy* *." But his Lordship goes further; he not only confesseth that this learned age was favourable to the SUCCESS of *Christianity*, but that it was most adapted to its GENIUS; since, those who published it chose rather that it should be submitted to the examination of REASON, than forced upon the world by the weight of AUTHORITY. " It is plain" (says his Lordship) " that the first publishers of *Christianity* did not " rest the cause primarily or solely on AUTHORITY " of any kind. It is plain that they submitted the " Gospel, and the Authority of those who published " it, to the examination of REASON, as any other " system even of divine Philosophy ought to be " submitted †."

After this, to talk of any real advantage the Gospel can gain by *ignorance*, or any real hurt it can receive from *knowledge*, is reckoning much upon the advantage of favourable hearers.

Another *presumption* that Knowledge is not injurious to the interests of Religion, was the later conduct of the MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL. The noble Writer, whose suggestion I am here opposing, hath thought fit to represent them as a set

* Bolingbroke's Works, Quarto Edition, Vol. IV. p. 373, 374. † Vol. IV. p. 267.

of

of knavish Politicians combined together to support Revelation as the best system to advance the Wealth and Power of their Order. But whether Revelation be a divine Truth or a commentitious Fable; whether the Order be Ministers of Religion, or Confederates in Iniquity; it is at least certain, that men who have devoted their time and talents to the service of this Institution must needs be best acquainted with its nature, and with the means most proper to advance, or to retard its interests. And this their superior knowledge will admit of no dispute, if, as is pretended, Revelation was their INVENTION: for they could not but be very intimate with the work of their own hands. Now it is remarkable, that when divers accidental causes had concurred to revive learning in the West (not the least of which was the protection and encouragement the Clergy afforded to the exiled Greeks), this Order was amongst the first, as soon as ever it had given any signs of returning life, to cherish and support it; to raise and restore it to its ancient dignity and splendor. One amongst them in particular having done more in this service than all the Laity of that age together. I need not tell the learned hearer, that I mean ERASMUS *. The inference I would draw from it

* There is one circumstance in the life and character of this excellent Person, that distinguishes him with advantage from most others, even of the greatest eminence in Letters: and will for ever endear his memory to the Wise and Good. His zeal for the interests of Learning and Religion was equally warm and constant. To serve the first, he began with discrediting the MONKS, the mortal

it is this, That had the Clergy, who best understood the mutual effects which *Learning* and *Revelation* must have upon one another, been apprehensive that LETTERS would prove injurious to the FAITH, which it was, it seems, their *peculiar* interest to support; so cunning Politicians had never acted so absurd a part as to promote Learning when it was in their power to suppress it. Yet they did support it. And, with no great assistance from the Laity, advanced that degree of eminence in which our Fathers have seen it.

I know it hath been pretended, that in this service the Clergy were passive; that they entered into it with reluctance; that they went heavily with the current,

mortal Enemies of reviving Letters. He pushed them with all the vigour of his wit; and seemed resolved to give no quarter to that ignorance which was become the mother and nurse of all the bigotry, and superstition, which most dishonoured and defiled Religion. In this attack on the established barbarity of the times, he succeeded so well, as to bring good Letters into fashion: to which he gave a new splendor by preparing for the press correct Editions of many of the best antient Writers both ecclesiastical and profane. But his labours were not yet ended. He had a new adventure to undertake. He lived to see the *zeal* for Letters, which he had been so instrumental in promoting, carry the VIRTUOSI of *Italy* into an opposite and yet more ridiculous extreme than the *monkish*, when he first set upon laughing ignorance out of the world. The Italian Latin Writers (and almost every body then was a Latin Writer), from their dread and horror of monkish barbarisms, would use no word, not even when they treated of

current, which then ran strongly to the advancement of Science. But they who say so, know little of the history of those times. It is true, the poor *Monks* in the midst of all their blindness, saw well enough the havock Learning would make throughout all the quarters of Superstition: and therefore employed their weak endeavours to stop the progress of it. But what was the issue? They made themselves doubly ridiculous: for the learned Clergy were not now content to despise, they found it necessary to expose, their ignorance. Soon afterwards indeed the world was surprised with the sudden rise of a more formidable Order of Religious, the JESUITS; who perhaps had been well pleased to have acted their parts

of the highest mysteries of Religion, but what had been consecrated as it were in the Capitol, and dispensed to them by the sacred hand of TULLY. Erasmus observed the growth of this folly with the greater concern, as he thought he saw, under all their fondness for the Language of old *Rome*, a growing libertinage, which disposed them to think slightly of the Christian FAITH; and, what is still stranger, gave them even a reverence for the absurdities of the old Gentile worship. Now, this opposite extreme, he thought it equally his duty to expose: which he hath done in that immortal work intitled CICERONIANUS: and done so effectually, that the public was soon brought back to that just medium which he had been all his life endeavouring to mark out for their observance: Purity, but not Pedantry, in Letters; and Zeal, but not Bigotry, in Religion. In a word, the employing his talents of genius and literature on subjects of general importance declared him a TRUE CRITIC; and his opposing the extremes of all Parties in their turns declared him an HONEST MAN.

parts like their predecessors, in the shade of cloistered ignorance. But the matter was then too far gone. These Politic Fathers, if you will, were indeed forced to swim with the stream: but they went in it with so good a grace that few have more effectually contributed to the advancement of Learning. In a word, this was the *general Spirit* of the Christian Clergy; both of the Friends and Enemies of *Rome*, that from the time in which *Letters* gave the first symptom of recovered life, to the present, they cherished them with a zeal and assiduity next to what they used in the support and defence of their more peculiar charge, *Religion*.

What then must we conclude, but that they thought, and still think, that the Christian Faith is much benefited by the application of human Learning to its service? They were not mistaken, as I shall now endeavour to shew.

For, from these PRESUMPTIONS, I proceed to a DIRECT PROOF, that as the infant growth of the Gospel was not retarded by that flourishing state of Knowledge which saw it in its birth; so the revived Knowledge of these latter ages did greatly support the established honours of Revelation, by illustrating its primeval Truths.

Since the more careful cultivation of natural and moral Science, PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, and ANTIQUITY, have all contributed to spread a new light over the evidences of it.

In *natural Philosophy*, more exact enquiries have been made into the contents of the superior covering of the terraqueous Globe; the peculiarities of whose arrangements

arrangements give the strongest evidence to the Mosaic account of the *Deluge* *. And the immortal Theory of *Newton* absolutely demonstrates that intimate relation which *Moses* speaks of, between the *Creator* and his *work*.

*Profane History*, the more nicely it is examined, the more clearly it discovers, through all its corruptions, an exact and surprising conformity with the *sacred:* It affords a vast number of precious Monuments that serve to illustrate those obscurities in holy Writ, which time and the universal change of manners, both Social and Civil, have unavoidably occasioned amongst men.

The Science of *Antiquity*, which is properly conversant with the manners and customs of ancient times,

* The contents of the Ocean are found, in a petrified state, all over the terrestrial part of the Globe; and in places most distant from those in which they were first formed. I say they are found over all the earth, but not in all sorts of soils indifferently. And from these two circumstances considered together, an incontestable proof of the truth of the Mosaic relation, I think, may be deduced. Had these adventitious fossils not been found in every quarter of the Globe, we could not conclude the Deluge to have been *universal:* and had they been found in all kind of soils indifferently, we might suppose them to be (what they were once commonly thought) the natives of those narrow beds in which they are discovered, and a kind of *lusus naturæ*. But when we see them spread over every climate, and yet only in such soils as are proper for the preservation of *foreign bodies*, we rightly conclude them to be the deposite of a Deluge of waters which covered the whole face of the Earth.

times, supports the general credit of sacred Scripture by illustrating those internal marks that prove the high antiquity to which they pretend.

The Science of *Morals* hath been more successfully pursued, and more happily investigated, since the revival of Letters, than at any other period whatever. And this, reflected upon Gospel-morality, hath thrown such a lustre on the purity of its nature, on the utility of its general direction, and on the truth of revelation principles, as shews its original to be indeed divine.

True Knowledge being thus friendly to the FAITH, you will naturally expect, I suppose, to find the great Masters of Science confirming what is here said, by their warm attachment to REVELATION. The expectation is not unreasonable. And you have the pleasure to see every great name amongst the Laity, such as BACON, BOYLE, NEWTON, GROTIUS, SELDEN, SYDENHAM, PASCHAL, and LOCKE, no less respectable for their sincere belief of *Christianity* than for their profound Knowledge in their several Professions. Nor should you suffer yourselves to suspect that the weight of this argument is at all diminished, if there be others, accounted in the rank of Learned Men, who have affected to think slightly of the Religion of their Country. For when the matter is to be decided by Authority, Hobbes I suppose will not be opposed to Newton, or Spinoza to Bacon. Much less would any one compare Toland with Grotius, or Tindal with Selden, or Coward and Morgan with Harvey and Sydenham.

If

If then true Science hath thus advanced the credit and glory of REVELATION, by the nature of its principles, and the sentiments of its professors; and if yet there hath been, ever since the revival of LETTERS, a gradual defection from the Faith, we must seek for the causes of this Apostasy in something else than in a SUPERABUNDANCE OF KNOWLEDGE. And on a fair inquiry, I persuade myself, they will not be difficult to find.

We have just seen, how one division of the learned World, into the GREAT and the SMALL *Philosophers*, contributes to the credit of Religion: another, into the MORAL and the IMMORAL, would no less support its honour, were it not too invidious a task to oppose these to one another, by name. But the various instances may be safely trusted to every man's own recollection. For who hath not observed, that in the learned world every the most virtuous person hath been most eminent for his adherence to *Revelation:* and that such who have distinguished themselves in the cause of *free-thinking* have been generally as remarkable for the free indulgence of their passions. Nor is it at all strange, that, when men have nothing to hope, and much to fear from a Religion proposed to them as true, they should for their own ease be willing to find, or, if that fails, to suspect it to be false. And when once men are in this disposition, they will never want objections to FACTS established by the fullest evidence; or to DOCTRINES supported by the strongest reasoning.

But, it will be said, perhaps, " Why did not this natural, though unreasonable prejudice, appear sooner? Men have been always vicious; and have ever since the first appearance of *Christianity* been made uneasy in their vices."

The fact is true. But the answer to the question easy. We are to consider that, for many ages preceding the restoration of Learning, SUPERSTITION had invented a thousand expedients to evade the threats of Religion against a wicked life, to reconcile the difference; and to make Salvation consistent with the practice of habitual immorality. So that bad men were under no temptation to quarrel with the evidences of their Faith, in order to enjoy their vices in quiet.

But the case is much altered since Religion, by the assistance of revived Learning, hath been restored to its ancient purity. The original terms of the Gospel Covenant between God and man are seen to be immoveable: That *habitual crimes* can be no otherwise atoned for but by *sincere repentance:* And that the very essence of *repentance* consists in forsaking vice, and returning to the actual practice of virtue.

However, admitting so rare a phenomenon as an Unbeliever of real learning and reasonable morals; it would be absurd to ascribe this to his superior Knowledge, when so natural an account may be given of this traverse, from his learned passions and infirmities. A *progress in arts* is far from working that change in the heart and affections which a *progress in the practice of Religion* is wont to do.

The

The higher you advance in FAITH, the easier you subdue, and the more skilfully you balance your appetites and affections: but too often, the further you advance in SCIENCE, the more you inflame those appetites and render them intractable. PRIDE and VANITY grow spontaneously out of the consciousness, whether real or imaginary, of superior knowledge. As these passions render us impatient of instruction, and scarcely submitting to be *self-taught*, so they are most gratified when we quit the opinions of the crowd. "If all my Learning (says such a one to himself) only leads me to think with the *Many*, and to have my science confounded in the mass of popular opinions, how shall I be distinguished with advantage from the ignorant and illiterate? To give such people a due esteem for my importance, they should see that Learning leads men to conclusions, very distant from common sentiments. These visions, light and fantastic as they are, have, I am afraid, led many scholars to affect a singularity in thinking, which their better judgments, if not their very hearts, condemned.

This infirmity of learned heads did not escape the noble Writer, whose maxim is now under consideration; when, speaking of what he calls *the resurrection of Letters*, he said, "In the darkness of "ignorance, superstition prevailed: in the light of "knowledge, overweening curiosity, the offspring of "SELF-CONCEIT; as self-conceit is of PRIDE *." And in another place, "As men advance in Know-"ledge, their *self-conceit* is apt to increase †."

* Vol. iv. p. 170. † Vol. iv. p. 171.

But if simple vanity be thus strong, how powerful will it prove when joined to warm resentments for neglected merit or injurious suspicions! I wish I could not say, there have been some, even of those consecrated to the service of Religion, who have suffered those passions and resentments to carry them into the quarters of the Enemy.

But as to the Learned of that time, many circumstances concurred to indispose them towards the Religion of their Country. They went to the cultivation of the *new Learning*, as it was then called, with a sort of enthusiasm. They were promised wonderful things from it And nothing could more flatter their passions than to fancy they had discovered by it, that the Religion, under which sense and conscience had lain so long oppressed, was false; a prejudice they would be very ready to indulge out of revenge to the *Monks*, who employed all their Authority to discredit and discountenance the *new Learning*, and all the favourers of it.

Again, there are some Sciences little conversant in that kind of proof by which the truths of Religion are supported; such as the simple and mixed Mathematics, which labour only in strict demonstration. What wonder then, that the simple Demonstrator *; unused

* " Les Geométres mêmes (says a very able judge of these matters) qui devroient mieux connoître les avantages de l'analise, que les autres Philosophes, donnent souvent la preference à la sinthese. Aussi, quand ils sortent de leurs calculs pour entrer dans les recherches d'une nature differente, on ne leur trouve plus la même clarté, la même precision, ni la même *etendue d'esprit.* Nous

unused to calculate the numerous combinations that constitute the various degrees of moral probability, should, when the evidence for Religion came before him, appear little fitted, and less disposed to estimate its force?

To the *incapacity*, which an addiction to certain Sciences induceth, may be added the *prejudices* which certain circumstances in the state of the two Religious parties, that divide the Western world, were apt to occasion. In the CHURCH OF ROME, the gross corruptions; and amongst PROTESTANTS, their endless divisions into sects and factions. The *corruptions* were apt to make doubting men suspect *Revelation* to be only a knavish Fable; the *divisions*, that it was only an enthusiastic dream.

Hitherto it appears that it is not Learning, but the infirmities of those who profess Learning, which produce that infidelity whose origin is the subject of our inquiry.

But certainly, its largest source is *pretended learning* and *superficial knowledge*; the very defect and want of that, to which his Lordship ascribes the present propensity to unbelief. In a state of *simple Ignorance* men hardly get so far as into the confines of doubt: which was their case before the *resurrection of Letters:* Superficial knowledge soon brings them

Nous avons quatre metaphisiciens celebres, DESCARTES, MALEBRANCHE, LEIBNITZ, et LOCKE. Le dernier est le seul qui ne fut pas Geometre, et de combien n'est il pas superieur aux trois autres?" Essai sur l'Origine des Connoissances Humaines, 2de partie, p. 289, 90.

them thither, and supplies them with many shallow objections against Religion: and this has been the state of things ever since. And the vanity that accompanies learned pursuits being stronger and more unchecked in the entrance to Science than in the more advanced stages of it, as having but little of that *conscious ignorance* to counterbalance it, which increases in proportion to our progress, the doubts and objections of the half-learned will soon terminate in settled infidelity. Hence it is we find the leaders and professors of Free-thinking to have been generally of this class of men. And hence it is, that there are now much fewer Unbelievers amongst eminent men in the learned Professions than at the revival of Letters. For as Science has kept advancing, and the true theory of nature opened, men's hard thoughts of Revelation have gradually lessened and subsided. The Philosophy of *Aristotle*, when the Schools first got to its source in the sixteenth Century, inclined the Italian literati to *Atheism:* and the new inventions of *Descartes*, in the seventeenth, disposed the French to *naturalism*. They have both now given place to the true theory of nature. And Newton, as well by his doctrine as example, has taught the Philosophic world to believe and tremble. Nor is the present overflow of infidelity any objection to the truth of this observation. For, as to the great body of unbelievers, it is neither deep, nor yet superficial, Learning that gives the bias. This, indeed, may form the *leaders:* but it is FASHION only (as in every other folly) that perverts the *followers*.

For

For just as in the times of IGNORANT DEVOTION, *believing* was the mode; so in these our days of LEARNED INDIFFERENCE it is *free-thinking*. It is not much nor little learning, it is not knowledge, nor yet ignorance, which influences the body of mankind in their Opinions, any more than in their dress; it is CREDITABLE IMITATION, the thing we call FASHION.

In a word, if we consider LEARNING in the sense of a *discipline for the improvement of the understanding*, it has at all times been of infinite advantage to REVELATION. Yet it must not be denied, that it may sometimes be so circumstanced as to produce much mischief. I have shewn that both antient and modern Learning have contributed to the propagation and establishment of the Christian Religion: yet it is but too true that the one, in the *genius of its Doctrines*, and the other in the *mode of its propagation*, have, with great good, accidentally occasioned variety of evil.

The *metaphysical principles* of antient Philosophy were destructive of the great doctrines of our Faith *; which made St. *Paul* caution the Churches, lest any should *spoil them through Philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men* †.

The *mode of propagation* has done all the mischief in these latter times. The use of Letters among the Antients, even in the flourishing state of them, was confined to the FEW; who, by their stations in life, were enabled to make a real and a reasonable

* Divine Legation, Book III. Sect. 4.

† Col. ii. 8.

improvement.

improvement. But since the invention of printing, the *instruments of Knowledge* have grown so common as to get into the hands of the PEOPLE: where, instead of improving the understandings, they have had no other effect than to inflame the passions: of which RELIGION, SOCIETY, and even LETTERS themselves, now feel the miserable effects.

On the whole then we see, how ridiculous as well as malicious the noble person's observation is, "That Revelation owes its credit to ignorance; and loses ground as Learning and Science advance against it." For what there is of fact, on which he supports his observation, is only this, that *there is a greater number of Unbelievers amongst the professors of Christianity since the revival of Letters than before.* But if this inference be just, it would hold as well against the *being of a God*, as against the *truth of Revelation:* for, to one Atheist in the Monkish times, there were a hundred at the revival of Learning. One degree of science is fitted to discover error; and another, to find out the truth. In the interim, the infirmity of our nature betrays us, and in running from an absurdity we rarely stop till we be got intangled in its opposite.

But the inference is, in every view, so groundless, that *Christianity* (as we have shewn) made its first way against the highest powers and prejudices, in the very centre of the most flourishing age of Knowledge.

At the last revival of Letters it received the strongest aid from human Science; and the sincerest homage

homage from the most illustrious names that ever adorned or cultivated Letters.

The only enemies it found amongst the Learned were either such as were immoral in their lives; or were tied down by a false Philosophy to inveterate prejudices; or were carried away by vanity; or were incompetent judges by their unacquaintance with the nature of the proofs; or lastly such who *pretended only* to a Knowledge they indeed had not.

And as to the gross body of licentious men, Learning had no concern in the affair; These were entirely under the sway and influence of FASHION.

From all this we conclude, that let INFIDELITY be risen to what height it will, it is not yet of that kind which brings any real discredit to REVELATION.

The Rejectors of it, therefore, would do well to consider the grounds on which they stand; and what account they will be able to give to the great Judge of all the earth at his second coming, for having contributed to that horrid defection which he hath foretold will be then found amongst men.

# THREE SERMONS;

PREACHED AND PUBLISHED
ON THE OCCASION OF

The late REBELLION in 1745:

AND,

# A DISCOURSE

ON THE

NATURE OF THE MARRIAGE-UNION,

SERMONS on the REBELLION:

XIV. Preached in November 1745.

XV. On the General Fast-day, Dec. 18, 1745.

DEFENCE of the preceding Discourse.

XVI. Thanksgiving Sermon.

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XVII. DISCOURSE on the NATURE of the MARRIAGE-UNION; with

A POSTSCRIPT.

# SERMON XIV.

*Preached and published in the Month of November* 1745, *while the Rebel-Army was in England.*

1 PET. ii. 17.

FEAR GOD, HONOUR THE KING.

THE holy Apostle has, with great propriety, joined together these two precepts of our duty to GOD and the CIVIL MAGISTRATE; as well knowing what mutual influence Religion and Society have, and what mutual aid they bestow, upon one another: that the truth and purity of Faith prescribe and recommend the rules of civil justice; and that a free and equal Government favours and encourages the profession of the truth.

But not only the genius and disposition of Religion and Government dispose them to this friendly intercourse of good offices; but the actual administrations of their respective powers are always imparting mutual assistance to one another. The State lending its coercive power to restrain and

punish that vice and immorality which renders all religious profession, contaminated with it, vain before God; and the Church employing the terrors of the Lord to inforce obedience to the Magistrate's lawful commands: teaching men subjection, *not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

But this is a truth, which, I presume, will easily find its way to an *English* audience; who now actually possess and enjoy all those blessings which arise from so natural and sacred an Union. For by the *equity* of our *civil* Constitution the *consciences of men* are not only left free, but protected in their liberty: and by the truth and power of our *religious*, the *rights of citizens* have been more than once supported, when threatened by arbitrary and illegal power.

But then, though true and pure Religion, and a just and equal Government, be thus fruitful of mutual good; Superstition and Despotic power are, on the contrary, as productive of mutual evil; incessantly inflaming one another's disorders, till they sink the wretched victims of their tyranny into the lowest state of misery and distress.

For when once Superstition hath violated the rights of conscience, then, in order to dispose the civil magistrate to become the executioner of their decrees, or, if they fail in that, to be an unconcerned Spectator of their violence, they preach up his DIVINE RIGHT, and a power from Heaven like their own: with a free invitation to make as bold with property, as they have done with conscience. On the other side, whenever the civil Magistrate aims

to

to play the tyrant, he naturally begins with giving up sense and piety for a prey to Superstition and Church censures; in order to save labour, and to receive one half of the man already subdued to his hands.

In a word, that Religion, which renders void the first precept of my text, by taking away the *fear of God*, will always be for introducing a form of Government which renders void the second, by taking away all *honour from the King*. And so, reciprocally, will an *honourless King* promote the worship of a *fearless God*. And for the truth of this, we need look no further than upon the insolent attempts, just now making, to overturn our happy Constitution in Church and State, and, in its stead, to introduce POPERY and ARBITRARY POWER.

But of this complicated monster, now crawling from the North, which, Amphisbena like, has at either end a Head, it is sufficient to observe, that though Each may lead and follow in its turn, yet they are still inseparable: and that between them both, they effectually make void this great Christan summary of human conduct, to *fear God and honour the King:* POPERY entirely effacing from the *minds* of men all religious fear of the Deity; and ARBITRARY POWER tearing from their *affections* all manly honour for the Magistrate.

To begin therefore with POPERY, under its best face, that of a *Religion*, though it be, in truth, little other than a mere *Antichristian Policy*.

This Religion strips Christianity of the *fear of God*, First, by transferring much of the worship due to the Creator upon the creature, in their idolatrous adoration of dead men; by whose merits and mediation the anger of the offended Deity is supposed to be appeased, and the unalterable terms of justice, between God and man, removed or relaxed: The very same idolatry, which, the Apostle *Paul* assures us, had banished all *fear* of the Deity out of the Pagan world, when the *wrath of God was revealed* by Jesus *from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* That is, who mixed with their knowledge of the true God, the most abominable idolatries, *and changed his glory into an image made like to corruptible man, &c.* A practice, which, if it begins not in a contempt of the Deity, must necessarily end in it, and take away all *fear of God's* JEALOUSY.

A second way, in which *Popery* takes away the *fear of God*, is in its doctrine and discipline of penitence. We are taught, as well by nature as the Gospel, that sin is so offensive to God's purity as to *provoke his wrathful indignation* upon transgressors. Hence, the *fear of God's* displeasure tends to keep men in their duty; and to call them back to it, when they have transgressed, by a seasonable repentance.

Now, in the *church of Rome*, the doctrine of attrition with absolution roots out all this holy *fear*, by teaching men, that an ill-spent life is to be atoned by simple sorrow, and the priest's forgiveness,

at

at the hour of death: Whereby, all *fear of God's* JUSTICE becomes evaded.

A third way, by which Popery takes away the *fear of God*, is in transferring his rule and government in the Church, upon a mere man, assuming to himself all power both in heaven and in earth. And he administers this power with the same extravagant impiety with which he usurped it; by giving indulgences to sin, and dispensations from the most solemn obligations of morality. So that such an exercise of Church Authority cannot but work out of the minds of men all *fear of God's* DOMINION.

A fourth way, by which Popery takes away the *fear of God*, is in its tyranny over conscience, called submission to the *Holy See*. It is the Gospel-doctrine, that God alone is the Judge of conscience; that it is accountable only to him; and that to bring it before another Tribunal, is to usurp upon the rights of the Divinity. For *who art thou*, says the Apostle *Paul, that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.* Yet hath this unchristian Church, in defiance of the *divine*, and in opposition to the maxims of *human* laws, erected a COURT OF INQUISITION, which imprisons, starves, and burns all who set not their opinions by those of the *Holy See*. Now, amongst the numerous evils of this infernal butchery, this is not the least, that it has a natural tendency to root out all *fear of God:* For Hypocrisy (which is the only genuine offspring of Force) familiarizing its mask to the face of Heaven, soon wears out of the mind all *fear of*

*the divine* OMNISCIENCE, intent only on deceiving these more dreaded tyrants over conscience.

Thus we see, by how many various ways the *fear of God*, which is the soul of piety, is weakened and rendered void by this daring Impostor, who usurps the reverend name of the *holy catholic Church*.

Its inseparable companion, DESPOTIC POWER, which generally follows it, but now, indeed, seems to lead the way, under its most hideous form of a bloody and unnatural Rebellion, tends equally to destroy all *honour* due to *Kings*.

Let us consider from whence the *honour* due to that sacred character is naturally derived: and how inevitably arbitrary power tendeth to destroy it.

The first ground of *honour* is, that a KING, who considers the people, as his CHILDREN, of his family and houshold, is incessantly employed in feeding, supporting, and enriching those committed to his care. So that gratitude, which requires all the returns of filial duty and affection, gives him *honour*, *as to a common father*. On the other hand, a TYRANT, who regards his subjects as his SLAVES, born for the gratification of all his impotent purposes, is only solicitous how to make the most of their blood and sweat: the fruits of which he squanders away in wild projects of depopulating ambition, or in his more destructive habits of luxury and pleasure: So that, instead of *honour*, his actions repay him with deserved aversion and CONTEMPT.

Another

Another ground of *honour* is the equal protection a *King* affords to all his subjects; not suffering his people to be oppressed in their religious rights by cruel or intolerant Churchmen; or, in their civil, by proud and overbearing Nobles; which gives him *honour as their common protector.* The *Tyrant*, on the contrary, who wants the assistance of Superstition to support his illegal prerogative, and the connivance of the Powerful, in the unjust exercise of it; delivers up his people, for a prey to Both; that himself may direct and preside in the common pillage; which must needs turn all esteem and *honour* into hatred and DETESTATION.

Another ground of *honour* is, that the rule which the King prescribes to the exercise of his power, is the old, established, and well known Laws of the realm; by which the People are secured in the freedom of their persons, and in the enjoyment of their possessions. Hence, the *King becomes honoured as the common judge*, the avenger of wrong and oppression. On the other hand, the *Tyrant*, by making his *will and pleasure* the rule of his administration, imprisons and confiscates without legal complaint or forfeiture; which, exposing liberty and property a prey to court sycophants, reduces all *honour* to a SERVILE FEAR.

The last ground of *honour* is, the *King*'s owning himself created by the People, and for their sake*: The end of his office, being the public good: So

* Rex detur propter regnum, et non regnum propter Regem. Fortescue, de Laud. Leg. Ang. c. 37.

that he is *honoured by them as their common benefactor*. A *Tyrant*, on the contrary, claims his right from Heaven, or Nature, or Conquest, or, in a word, from any thing, rather than that from whence only a free obedience can arise; and consequently holds the People made for the gratification of his pleasure, and the support of his magnificence; and that, when he condescends to employ himself in their service, 'tis merely of his princely grace and favour; which turns all *honour* into jealousy and DISTRUST.

Thus, here again, we see, how *arbitrary power*, so essentially different from our happy Constitution, deprives the Magistrate of all civil honour, by making him unworthy of it; and leaving nothing in its place but contempt, aversion, jealousy, and slavish fear.

When we are therefore bid by the Apostle PETER to *honour the King*, we must conclude, he previously supposes, that we have had the courage to procure for ourselves such a Constitution as establisheth a *King worthy of honour*; or, at least, that we have the grace to preserve and support what our ancestors' courage hath procured for us. For if, where the Apostle bids us *fear God*, he means that we should adhere to the great Lord and Governor of the universe, in opposition to those dumb idols, which it was the purpose of *Gospel-holiness* to root out; then certainly, where he bids us *honour the King*, he must needs mean a legitimate Magistrate, in opposition to a lawless Tyrant, so contrary to the true spirit of *gospel-liberty*. And St. PAUL, where he exhorts men to civil obedience, defines this lawful Magistrate

Magistrate to be one, who *beareth not the sword in vain—A terror not to good works, but to the evil—A minister of God to us for good—An avenger, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil:* the very description of our own constitutional Monarch. In a word, If it were the intent of the Holy Spirit, in the precept of *fearing God*, that we should support Religion in the purity of the Gospel: then certainly it was his intent, in the precept of *honouring the King*, to recommend to us a legal Government, which only can support Religion in that purity.

Hence we see, that to *fear God and honour the King* is, in other words, to support our holy Religion against *popish Superstition*; and our equable government against *Arbitrary power*. Precepts never out of season to recommend to free Men and Christians: but, in this time of public danger, when both are so insolently threatened, and, in them, every thing that is dear and valuable to honest men, the duty of our ministry calls upon us, with all our power, to inforce them.

If therefore, my Brethren, you have yet in your hearts any sentiments of true Religion, any feeling for the love of your Country; if you be *Christians* any more than by profession; if you be *Britons* any more than by name; if you have the piety, as well as reason of Protestants; if you have the virtue, as well as the rights and privileges of Free-men; you will now *stand fast in the liberty in which Christ has set you free,* and in which the Holy Spirit, by my text, exhorts you to persevere.

You

You will drive far from you the yoke of *Rome*, now ready to be once more cast about your necks. A yoke, which your forefathers could not bear, even when use had made it habitual; and ignorance had shut them up from the sight of Truth and Liberty. But You, who have a clear view, as well as a free choice, of good and evil, will doubtless prefer Gospel light to the Antichristian kingdom of darkness. You will, doubtless, prefer liberty of conscience to blind obedience, or the dungeons and fires of an Inquisition; You will prefer piety to superstition, virtue to fanaticism, your Bible to the mass-book, and sense to nonsense.

You will employ all your virtue to oppose the insults of *France*, which your forefathers, at all times, so well knew how to repel: You will rather chuse to trust your liberties and properties to laws of your own making, than to be beholden, for the precarious enjoyment of them, to the *good will and pleasure* of that monster in the creation, that despoiler of God's Works, an arbitrary and an unlimited Master.

In a word, would you aspire to be virtuous; would you be willing to be thought religious; would you continue to be happy here, or would you entertain hopes of happiness hereafter; you must now, all of you, in your several stations, concur to the vigorous support of that glorious Constitution to which you have the honour to belong: The pride and confidence of our friends! The envy of our Neighbours! The terror of our enemies, and the admiration of mankind! Happy Nation! the nurse of heroes, the school of sages, the seminary of holy martyrs, the distinguished

guished favourite of Heaven! But how momentary are all these blessings, when freedom is once separated, and divorced from virtue! for, according to the generous saying of an ancient freeman, *That very day which sees a man a slave, takes away half his virtue.* But, above all, let me remind the benevolent man, that though we ourselves be the first and greatest, yet we shall not be the only sufferers by so terrible a reverse. The effects of it will be felt by the remotest nations. *Britain* hath now the distinguished glory of being the Depositary, as it were, of civil and religious Freedom, for the rest of mankind: And while we continue faithful to our trust, there are still hopes that the degenerate sons of men may, some time or other, catch this noble fire from us, and vindicate their ravaged birth-right. But, in our destruction, Liberty itself expires; and human nature will despair of evermore regaining its first and original dignity.

These indeed are motives consecrated to such only whom the sacred spirit of Liberty inspires. However, if these be too exalted for the times of a general luxury and corruption (the unhappy effects of ill-used freedom) there are yet other considerations, and such as are abundantly sufficient, to animate those who have not lost all sense of Manhood, along with their Virtue and Religion.

For when ever had an *Englishman* higher cause of resentment, than at present, when he sees *Spain*, whose impotency we have long despised, and *France*, whose violence we have never failed to repel, presume

sume to impose, upon a powerful Nation, a mean, servile, tributary Tyrant; and to attempt the dethroning an illustrious Family, raised by Providence, for the Head of the Protestant interest abroad; and appointed by a willing People, the Protector of *British* liberty, at home?

But, what so just an indignation may fail to effect, the secret sense of ignominy and dishonour will amply supply. Should we not blush to have it said, that a mighty Kingdom, a People that still gives laws to the Main, and has long held the balance of Power between contending Empires, was suddenly overturned by a rabble of superstitious ruffians, of mountain robbers, of half-armed and half-starved barbarians, with a wild and desperate Adventurer at their head; and reduced, by the madness of these miserable varlets, from the most free and happy people upon earth, to be a Province to *France*, a Warehouse to *Spain*, and a patrimony to the pretended successor of St. *Peter?* The very thought of so amazing a dishonour is enough to cover us with confusion. And certainly, if ever this dishonour should befal us, the most inclement, the most inhospitable of our *American* Plantations, would be far too good for us to run into, and hide our coward heads: There we might waste our wretched days; still more imbittered with this cruel reflection, That when LIBERTY, now driven from the Continent, had retired for refuge, and taken shelter, in *Great Britain*, we were unable to stay her parting footsteps, though she brought with her all her dowry of religious, of civil, and of social Virtues.

And

And now, if happily this consideration be but of power to kindle again any of the seeds of old *English* valour, they may be easily excited and blown into a flame by a virtuous *emulation* of our brave and generous Ancestors: The first in *Europe* who shook off that very Superstition and Tyranny with which we are now insulted; and ever-after, with the utmost vigour, repelled all the wicked attempts for their re-establishment: But never with so great hazard and expence as against that infatuated Family from whence this Pretender boasts to have had his birth, and from whence he derives his imaginary title, founded on I know not what jargon of indefeasible hereditary Right for the King, and passive obedience and non-resistance for the Subject: A title, which the much provoked resentment of an injured People hath long since with the highest justice dissolved and abrogated.

Nor should *Gratitude* lose its share in waking us from our fatal slumber of luxury and pleasure. The blessings those brave men purchased for us are inestimable, and the price they paid for them was immense. So that the warmest return of gratitude is due to the *Manes* of our Benefactors. Let us pay it in that way which most becomes us, and would best please them; a vigorous exertion of all our faculties to preserve the blessings they have procured for us.

But if neither shame nor gratitude can work upon us to venture any thing for the keeping ourselves free and happy, yet, at least, *natural affection*, and pity for our Posterity, (the last bar to ignominy in the

the absence of virtue) should make us either resolve to die bravely, or to deliver down unimpaired to our children that glorious heritage which our provident forefathers bequeathed to them, through us. And not suffer our cowardice or indolence, at this important juncture, to hazard the intailing upon our wretched offspring a long series of ignorance, superstition, want, servility, and all the miseries and distresses which attend *arbitrary government*, and *Papal communion*.

But if it be the unhappy fate of *England* that no generous motive, worthy the breasts of men and citizens, can make impression on her sons, now become insensible through sloth and luxury, They may yet, nay They should be applied unto, as Slaves, and awakened with the servile dread of punishment: A punishment as great as it is inevitable! The divine vengeance pursuing them at the heels, for their violated oaths and perfidious engagements; when in the face of Heaven, by the most sacred office of Religion, they invoked GOD as a witness and avenger, and swore allegiance to his excellent Majesty KING GEORGE. For natural Religion will teach us, though we throw off all reverence for the Revealed, that no crime is more offensive to the great God of Truth, than the breach of publi coaths. And civil History will inform you, that none is so speedily and severely punished: A punishment, most becoming the justice of Heaven. For the sanction of an Oath was the only means, amongst equals, of bringing men into Society; and is still the only means of keeping Societies entire.

But

But I trust, that neither Virtue nor Religion will be wanting, on this great occasion, to repel the storm now gathered over us; how much soever the state of both may need amendment. In conclusion, therefore, let me recommend it to men in all stations, as one of the most general and efficacious means for the successful discharge of their duty to the King and Government, religiously to implore a long forgotten succour, laughed at by most, and scarce trusted to by any, *The assistance of God's Holy Spirit*, to warm our Affections, to purify our Hearts, to enlighten our Understandings, to strengthen our Wills, and to supply all the weaknesses and defects of our corrupted Nature; to the glory of God's holy Name, and the good and happiness of Mankind.

# SERMON XV.

ON THE GENERAL FAST-DAY, DECEMBER 18, 1745.

*Preached and published while the Rebel-Army was in England.*

JOEL ii. ver. 20.

I WILL REMOVE FAR OFF FROM YOU THE NORTHERN ARMY, AND WILL DRIVE HIM INTO A LAND BARREN AND DESOLATE.

GOD, by the prophet JOEL, having denounced against a sinful People, the invasion of the *Assyrians*, together with the forerunners of that judgment, his *army of locusts*; at the same time, declares, that, on their true repentance, he would drive the Invaders back again into the horrid regions from whence they came; and with a slaughter as great as their preceding ravages and desolation.

Now the apostle PAUL tells us, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope**: By which we

* Rom. xv. 4.

understand in general, that the like disposition of humiliation before God, of hearty repentance for our sins, and sincere resolution of amendment, are the proper means of enabling us, at this juncture, to drive back the haughty powers of *France*, which now hover over us; together with their forerunners, this Northern army of locusts; allured hither by the scent of prey, because, as the prophet expresses it, *The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them, a desolate wilderness* *.

Thus far human reason, the true interpreter of Scripture, will allow us to infer. But further to conclude of God's dealings with States and Societies from his dispensations to the Jewish People, will be the occasion of our turning that Scripture, which the Apostle here tells us, was *written for our learning and instruction*, to our delusion and ruin. Yet, from this character given of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in several places of the Scriptures of the New, men have not only ventured to regulate God's proceeding with Particulars, but also to judge of the fate of Kingdoms and Societies, by his administration of the *Jewish* Nation. This hath been the source of numberless superstitions. Some of which dishonour Religion, by derogating from the justice of God: while others weaken and distract Government, by violating the rights of men. And all of them defeat the rational conclusions of that *learning* and instruction which may be found in Scripture; and which is *able to make us wise unto salvation*. In the number of these super-

* Joel ii. 3.

stitions

stitions is the popular opinion, That God, in the common government of the world, punisheth children for the crimes of their parents: A dispensation peculiar to the *Jewish* Nation; and there indeed administered with the highest equity *: but, in the present order of things, not to be employed without impinging on God's justice. So again, that other absurd fancy, which transfers to modern Kings the title peculiar to the *Jewish*, of the LORD'S ANOINTED: equally violates the rights of Men. For to resist the *Lord's anointed*, who was God's Deputy or Lieutenant in his kingdom, was rebellion against God. Hence court flatterers, when they had given the title to modern Kings, did not rest till they had invested them with the prerogatives of it likewise. And from thence inferred their divine Right, and the people's unlimited Obedience. Whereas, had this title, which belonged to the Jewish Kings in a literal and real sense, been applied, as it ought, to our Monarchs, in a figurative and accommodated meaning, it had been of excellent use to instruct the People in the sacred character of every legitimate Magistrate; the resisting of whose ordinances is, indeed, the resisting the ordinance of God.

But another place may be more proper to go through the many various errors and superstitions, which have arisen, in these latter ages, from a misapplication to the Men and Societies of the world at large, of the Principles and Providences on which the *Jewish* state was formed and conducted. It shall suffice at present, that I have just pointed out

* See Divine Legat. Book V.

their nature and consequences; and shewn how they arise from an apostolical declaration ill understood; *that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*, which, when rightly interpreted, yield that *patience and comfort*, St. Paul speaks of, as the genuine fruits of Christian *hope*. Let us distinguish, therefore, and always have in mind, that the DOCTRINAL points of the Old Testament were written for our *belief*; the MORAL parts for the regulation of our *conduct*; and the DEVOTIONAL for the exercise of our *piety*. This will lead us to St. *Paul*'s true meaning, where he says, *All scripture is written by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**. But then, as to the greater part of the Volume of the Old Testament, that which is HISTORICAL, and gives account of the Laws and Fortunes of the Jewish Republic, it was written for our *information*, concerning the general economy of God's dispensation to mankind; of which the divine establishment and administration of that Commonwealth makes a considerable part. A RELIGIOUS POLICY *added*, as the Apostle says, or thrust in, between the PATRIARCHAL and CHRISTIAN Dispensations, *because of transgressions*; and to preserve the memory of the true God, in an idolatrous world, *till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made*†. For this end, God saw fit to erect that State into a THEOCRACY, properly so called; in which he himself was the supreme civil Magistrate.

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † Gal. iii. 19.

The

The consequences of which form of Government were these: 1. That it was administered by the exertion of an *extraordinary* providence. 2. That Religion and civil Society were thoroughly *incorporated.* 3. That Religion had a *public,* as well as a *private* part; the subject of it being as well the State collectively, as individuals separately. And, 4. That the sanctions both of religion and society were *temporal* rewards and punishments. Of all this, that is to say, of the expediency and even necessity of such a form of Policy, for the carrying on the great ends of God's moral government of the world, and the natural consequences arising from it, I have elsewhere discoursed at large* .

Now from the *first* circumstance, the exertion of an *extraordinary* providence, it follows, that we are not to regulate our ideas of God's dealing with us, as a State or Nation, by his administration of the *Jewish Theocracy*; Mankind being now under a *common,* not an *extraordinary* providence: I mean, it follows, we are not to expect it in the DEGREE; though, indeed, from this circumstance, nothing hinders but we might expect it in the *kind.*

But then from the other *three* it follows, that we are not to expect it, even so much as in the KIND. For Religion, among the *Jews,* was incorporated with their Society, and had a PUBLIC part: Hence *Impiety,* when it abounded, became a public crime; and, as such, was, from time to time, severely punished on the State. But, the *Christian* Religion

* Div. Leg. Book V. sect. 2.

hath no public part; hath not the State, as such, but individuals only, for its subject. Hence *Impiety* is not now a *public*, but a *private* crime: For which, the offender will doubtless be severely punished, but his punishment shall be according to the rules of the Gospel dispensation.

Again, the *Jewish* sanctions were TEMPORAL only; which made it fit, and sometimes *necessary*, that the crimes, even of private men, should have their punishment inflicted on the State, as by that means condign misery was derived on particulars. But the sanctions of our religion are *future rewards and punishments*; for the latter of which, impious and wicked men are properly reserved; and therefore, there is not the same expediency in punishing them *through* the State.

This, then, to which numberless other considerations might be added, is sufficient to shew, that we have no real authority from *Scripture*, when interpreted on the principles of human reason, to conclude, that God's dealing with the *Jewish* people is the measure of administering his providence over other States: Or that, because the PRIVATE vices and impieties of men under that economy have, by the just judgment of God, often brought distress upon the COMMUNITY, that they have now the same tendency to provoke his wrath and indignation against ours.

This I presume to be a fair representation of this important subject: And I hope, it will not be judged unseasonable in a time of general danger; when, though the ill state of our moral condition should

should not be kept hid from us, yet methinks it ought not to be aggravated by discouraging examples drawn from those dreadful judgments inflicted on the *Jewish* nation: A parallel much insisted on; but not with that exactness which the dignity of the sacred Writings demands, or the crisis of our present Disorders seems to require; when every good man will deserve the public thanks, *Quod de republica non desperasset.*

But it will be asked, "Are not vice and impiety the certain destruction of Communities? And are not Communities the subject of God's mercies and judgments?" My answer is in the affirmative: And it will serve to support what hath been already said, concerning that crude, inconclusive Divinity, which makes God's dealing with the *Jews* the model of his Providence in the world at large. It will, at the same time, explain and clear up what may be further obnoxious to objection or misinterpretation.

To the first of these questions, therefore, I say, that where, in defining the nature of the *Jewish* Commonwealth, I spoke of God's national judgments on his *chosen people*, for their impieties, I used the exact and philosophic language of a Divine; and meant those *consequences* of wrong which follow from the *will of God*; not the *effects* which arise from the *nature of things*. Rewards and punishments of the first kind are those only which revealed Religion acknowledgeth for the sanction of its precepts: though platonic preachers, in their moral

harangues, may have been accustomed, by a *latitude* of expression, to call the mischiefs arising naturally, out of moral evil, by the name of *God's judgments*. Which, perhaps, would scarce deserve notice, were they not accustomed likewise to confound These with the judgments of God, *properly so called*; to the great injury, as I think, of revealed Religion, for reasons too long and too intricate to be here assigned. Now, as to the natural issue of vice and impiety, nothing can be more certain than that they are the inevitable ruin of a Commonwealth. For IMPIETY, which consists in a contempt of the sanctions of Religion, removeth the first and strongest pillar of Society, the fear of divine punishment, for falsehood and wrong. From hence ariseth a disregard to the *outward tie of oaths*, the great security of the MAGISTRATE; and a disregard to the *inward tie of conscience*, the great security of the PEOPLE. As *impiety* undermines society, so VICE more openly attacks it. But both with the same fatal success. The epidemic evils of every powerful Community in its decline, are LUXURY and AVARICE: Which, by an unnatural mixture, are incessantly begetting one another even in the same breast. By these means, the NATIONAL WEALTH, one of our main strengths against foreign invasions, becomes in part *exhausted*; and, which is almost as bad, in part, *unequally distributed:* And the PERSONAL VIGOUR of the people, which makes the other, is either enervated by opulence misemployed, or debased by sordid and inactive poverty. But to reckon up the train of evils, which

issue from these two master-vices, would be an endless task. Let it suffice to say, that these are the evils which fill private Families with unnatural quarrels; infest the Courts of justice with chicane; and distract the councils of Government with faction. FACTION, which accumulates all the evils of dissension in one; and, fraught with the dispositions of the worst citizens, impudently pretends to all the qualities of the best. FACTION, which scruples no shape however venerable, no name however sacred, to draw the deluded People to second her private and corrupt purposes, masked over with pious zeal for Religion, and disinterested love of our Country.

But then if the evils of *impiety* and *vice* be, separately, so destructive to a Public; How malignant must they prove, when they act in concert? as they always do, when they exist together. For profaneness gives an edge and keenness to immorality; and immorality claps on a leaden bias to the mind, which accelerates its growing aversion to Religion.

However secure, therefore, the PUBLIC may be from apprehending the *judgments of God* for the iniquity of particulars, yet we see it has every thing to fear, from *the nature of things*. A case, which, when arrived to a certain point, admits even of less hope than the other. For God, whose mercies are over all his works, frequently withholds the evils of his positive judgments from sinful man; but never reverses the order of Nature to embolden him in his wickedness. Yet we have this consolation at least,

least, that though such destruction be sure, it is still in our power to avert it. It is only resolving on a speedy course of sobriety, justice, and piety: By which, as kingdoms become great, so by that only can they remain secure. For, as in the natural body, an athletic habit, acquired by abstinence and exercise, can never be preserved by intemperance and sloth; so a body-politic become powerful by the modest parsimony, by the virtue and religion of its citizens, can never support its power by their luxury, injustice, and impiety.

We come now to the second question, "Whether STATES, as well as PRIVATE MEN, may not be the subject of divine displeasure, so as to bring down its severest judgments upon them?" To which we reply, that Nothing is more certain. A Society is an *artificial man*, having like the *natural*, all those essential qualities, which constitute a MORAL AGENT; The discernment of good and evil; A will to chuse, and a power to put its choice in execution. Hence the rules of civil justice, in the intercourse between nation and nation, are the very same, as those, in a state of nature, between man and man. And accordingly we find (for here Scripture comes in again *for our learning*) that God dealt with the *Jewish* nation under this idea. And though his *particular contract* with it, will not suffer us to collect a mode of providence over others, similar to what was administered amongst them; yet his entering at all into *contract* shews that states are considered, and will be dealt with by him as MORAL AGENTS.

We

We must needs therefore conclude, both from *Revelation* and *Reason*, that the hand of Heaven distributes good and evil to Societies, according to their merit or undesert: Not upon that fancy, that as States are only *artificial beings* with a present existence, and incapable of a future, therefore God is obliged in justice to punish and reward them HERE. This is a mere school invention, and confuted by the general history of the moral world: Where, we find indeed many signal examples of the divine vengeance inflicted upon States and Communities; yet, generally, at such a distance from the crime, that the punishment is not *identical*, as according to this learned fancy it ought to be: for the *sameness* is not real or natural, but nominal and artificial only. Again, according to this doctrine, the administration should be constant and exact, failing in no instance, nor defective in any degree. Whereas we have many examples in States as well as private men, where iniquity hath absolutely escaped the rod of divine vengeance. From all this we conclude, that, not for the fantastic reason here confuted, but for one far more weighty and substantial, SOCIETIES are punished or rewarded according to their behaviour; a reason worthy the dominion of the great Lord of the universe, That is to say, For example, and to keep alive the sense of God's providence, in a careless and impious world.

It remains, therefore, only to consider what those actions of Society are, which we suppose to be the objects of divine favour or displeasure: Now these (in

(in a Society, like our own, established on a system of Laws which secure reverence to the Deity, and impose due restraint on vice and immorality) can be evidently nothing else than the observance or neglect of GOOD FAITH, justice, and equity in the transactions of one of these communities towards all others. By this test, therefore, we might well consent that *Great Britain* should be tried to the utmost; tried even by her enemies. When it would be clearly seen whether, in her collective capacity, she deserves, or has just reason to fear that impending vengeance, from the hand of Heaven, with which, in a time so critical, good men may be but too apt to terrify themselves and others.

In all our national transactions since the REVOLUTION to these times, *Great Britain* has been so unfashionably tenacious of the public faith, and so generously intent on the good of *Europe*, that we have never passed for Politicians amongst those who are most famed for their science in the mysteries of State. And as to the war which we are at present engaged in; though the corrupt interests of Private Men, of Trading-bodies, and of State-parties amongst us may have all concurred to push us forward; yet a common observation is sufficient to satisfy you, that it was first begun against SPAIN, for satisfaction of real injuries, which they had owned, acknowledged; and in public convention contracted to repair. But, encouraged by our unhappy divisions, the agreement was unjustly violated, as soon, almost, as it was made. In this quarrel we were *principals*.

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An *auxiliary* war, in which the PUBLIC FAITH called upon us to engage, followed, in support of the house of AUSTRIA, taken at advantage, and against all the spirit of treaties cruelly attacked and plundered. Both these together soon produced a *defensive* war against FRANCE; whose restless ambition (essential to her Constitution) seizing every favourable conjuncture of advancing that idol of her politics, the giving law to *Europe*, now supported *Spain*, to persist in denying to do us justice, and encouraged the other enemies of the house of *Austria* to join her in their ungenerous depredations. And all this with an apparent design to break that established and equitable balance of Power, so necessary for the peace and felicity of *Europe:* Which when she found us resolved to maintain, she publicly denounced war against us in all its forms.

This is a true state of the public quarrel; of our share in it; and of our conduct with regard to all our neighbours. Now what is there in all this, that shall make us afraid to appeal for aid and protection to the tribunal of eternal justice?

If reparation, by the sword, for national injuries, after all the ways of peace had been tried in vain; If the discharge of public faith, when solemnly demanded, in behalf of a confederate Power, most cruelly oppressed; If self-defence against those who openly set themselves to defeat the honest purposes which Justice called upon us to discharge; If, lastly, the support of the established balance of power

power, that is, of the liberties of *Europe*, against the most detestable perfidy, the most unjust usurpations, and the most lawless and destructive ambition; If, I say, all, or any of these, may intitle us to the protection of Heaven, we seem to have the best grounded expectations for its declaring in our favour.

This public act of humiliation before God is therefore enjoined with a modesty and holy confidence, not always observed by AUTHORITY on these occasions: Where, with an impiety that makes sober men astonished, the tremendous Majesty of Heaven is too often mocked and insulted, by invoking its blessings on the arms of fraud, rapine, and injustice. But, blessed be God! GREAT BRITAIN hath now a CAUSE, for which it may not only with decency supplicate the protection, but with confidence appeal to the justice of Heaven: a *cause* founded on the solid basis of SELF-DEFENCE, PUBLIC FAITH, and the LIBERTIES OF MANKIND; all nobly vindicated in a just and necessary war.

There is only one impediment to the happy issue of our appeal; and that is the PRIVATE vices and impieties of the People: And to remove this, was the purpose of this solemn Act of devotion; in which we are called upon by our gracious *Sovereign* (ever intent upon our welfare) to humble ourselves before the avenging hand of God, and to deprecate his Judgments, by a free confession of our sins, and a determined purpose of amendment.

I have shewn you how certain and inevitable a destruction VICE and IMPIETY always bring upon a People.

a People. If this be not sufficient to induce you to a speedy reformation, think upon the consequence of persisting in them at this juncture; when, by suspending the protection of Providence, which, as a Community, I have shewn, we have just reason to expect, we hasten, by a stroke from Heaven, that ruin, which is more slowly advancing from the nature of things. So that, in our instant resolves, not only our *future* welfare, a matter of infinite importance, which we have in common with all men, but our *present*, is eminently concerned. The enjoyment of all that is dear and valuable to men, depending on the preservation of our happy Constitution, more shaken by our intestine vices, than by the arms of its degenerate and rebellious Citizens, now audaciously advanced into the very heart of the Kingdom.

Let us then, in good earnest, resolve upon a thorough Reformation; A return to that gracious simplicity of manners; that amiable modesty in dress and diet; that temperance in pleasures; that justice in business; which made BRITAIN so distinguished in the manly annals of our forefathers. Let us speedily return to that sober piety, that serious sense of Religion, by which our Ancestors were encouraged to form, and enabled to support, the PRINCIPLES on which this happy Constitution is erected. But above all, as the first step into the old paths of honour, let us emancipate ourselves from that detestable spirit of libertinism, impudently assuming the name of FREETHINKING; the bane of common life, the opprobrium of common sense,

sense, and the dishonour even of our common humanity. Let us but be instant in doing this, and we shall soon have earth and heaven once more in conjunction, to make us happy and victorious over all the confederated enemies of our peace.

## A DEFENCE

### OF THE PRECEDING

## DISCOURSE.

A FREE and equal Government is the greatest temporal blessing the Almighty ever bestowed upon mankind. Such an one, in his great mercy, he bestowed on us; of which we were in full possession, when a vile unnatural rebellion, supported by the most formidable Power in *Europe*, threatened to overturn it; and on its ruins, to erect a civil and ecclesiastic tyranny; the most detested evil wherewith God, in his wrath, ever permitted the enemy of mankind to deform the fair work of creation.

At this important juncture, when no human means, sufficient to save us, were at hand, but our determined courage to live and die with the Constitution, I observed some good men were apt to terrify themselves and others with an apprehension, that the *private* vices of the people had brought down this judgment of God, upon the PUBLIC, which

which it was to be feared must end in its destruction. Into this kind of Divinity I supposed them to be led by the consideration of God's dealing with the JEWISH PEOPLE; on whom, in the magnificence of his royal bounty, he had graciously bestowed the most excellent of all civil governments; subjected, however, to destruction in punishment for their *irreligious practices.*

At this juncture, a fast-day being appointed by authority, to implore God's blessings, and to deprecate his judgments, I understood it to be my duty, on such an occasion, both as a minister of God's word, and a subject of the King, to examine into the reasonableness of these apprehensions; and to shew, to those committed to my care, what they had indeed to trust to.

In the first place, therefore, I endeavoured to prove, that the case of the Jewish People could not, for many reasons, be brought into example: That the method of Providence, there administered, did indeed admirably fit the *Mosaic* constitution; but the Christian economy had revealed unto us a different way of punishing the sins of particulars: And that, on the principles of natural light, we might gather, that the punishment of a right constituted Public was due only to civil crimes; from which we being remarkably free, I concluded, that our happy Constitution had great reason to expect the distinguished protection of heaven: For that it would be hard to find, throughout the history of mankind, any one State, either ancient or modern, Monarchy or Republic, so long, and so eminently,

distinguished for its OBSERVANCE OF PUBLIC FAITH: There being but one instance since the Revolution (at which time our Constitution, properly, arose) where *good faith* was not most scrupulously and religiously discharged by it.

Such was the doctrine I delivered in the preceding discourse. And was it natural to think, that at such a time, and on such an occasion, it should give offence to a Divine of the Church of *England?* It did. And I was then told from the press, that "The clergy very well know, and needed "not my help to inform them, that God was "under a special covenant with the *Jews* for temporal good and evil. But as this covenant, whatever privileges it gave to the *Jews* above other "nations, could not destroy God's right as universal "governor; an argument therefore would very properly lie from God's dealing with the *Jews*, to "what other nations are to expect in like cases, in "such points as either reason or Scripture shew, to "appertain to God's universal government; of which "sort is the punishing nations and kingdoms for "the wickedness of them that dwell therein. As "appears from the FLOOD, from the case of SODOM "and GOMORRAH, of the NINEVITES, and of those "HEATHEN NATIONS whom the *Jews* were raised "up to destroy (as the Scripture expressly says) "*for their wickedness* *."

The pernicious doctrine to be confuted, we see, was this, "That God, in his common government "of the world, doth not deprive nations of that

* Hist. of Abraham, &c. p. 100.

greatest

" greatest blessing he ever bestowed upon them, a " *free and equal Government*, for the vices of *par-* " *ticulars*." This position, I supported on our *natural* notions of God's providence; and on what we find *revealed* of his moral government in Scripture. In the first, the Objector was silent: In the second (where I considered the *Jewish* government as the only case that could seem to support the contrary opinion), he supplies my omissions: and urges me with God's judgments on the *people at the flood, on Sodom and Gomorrah*, the *Ninevites*, and the *seven nations*.

But amongst all these, I could not find one *free and equal government*; for which, only, I undertake to be an advocate; and therefore they were omitted. Some of them were uncivilized tribes, living in a state of nature, in which there was *no* blessing of Government to take away: And others, in a still viler condition, the slaves of petty tyrannies, where the destruction of the State was the removal of God's severest curse. In a word, I was speaking of the greatest human happiness hostilely attacked, and in danger of being lost. And the Objector confutes my doctrine, by instances of the greatest human misery occasionally removed: The destruction of the noble Constitutions of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; to which, not over decently, he thought fit to compare the free Government of *Great Britain*. I was speaking, and speaking only, of a CONSTITUTION, of a COUNTRY, where civil and religious liberty flourished at their height. I never concerned myself, how God would deal with a rabble of savages: nor

thought it worth while to consider, what kind of a punishment it was, to those who groaned under it, to overthrow a tyranny. I regarded those illustrious Societies as hardly coming into account, when God, in his justice, weighs the fate of nations.

" * But Mr. *W.* (says the objector) who loves " to be by himself, after having retailed to us the " principles of *The Divine Legation*, comes to " this conclusion, diametrically opposite to the sense " of his brethren, and I believe of all Christian " divines from St. *Paul* to this day, *viz.* that *we* " *have no warrant to conclude, that because the* " *private vices and impieties of men under the* JEW- " ISH ECONOMY, *by the just judgment of God,* " *frequently brought amazing destruction on their* " *nation, that it has now the selfsame tendency to* " *provoke his wrath against* OURS." This I should have thought might have set the Objector right; and have shewn him, that I confined my doctrine to the blessing of a *free* and *equal* government, when I considered none other than the JEWISH and OUR OWN. But he seems to mean well, and to be much embarrassed: Let us try to help him out.

The temporal punishments, which God inflicts upon iniquity, have three objects, *Particulars*; a *People*; and a *State* or *Government*. The punishment of the two first Objects, I hold to be inflicted for the CRIMES OF MEN; the latter only for the CRIMES OF THE STATE. The subject of my sermon was concerning the punishment of *legitimate* States, *as such*. The particular case confined me to this

* Hist. of Abraham, &c. p. 101.

consideration;

consideration; the imminent danger of our happy Establishment from a powerful body of rebels, which, at the moment of my writing, had penetrated, without control, to the very centre of the kingdom. With God's punishment for the sins of particulars, by, what may be called, the *national judgments* of famine, pestilence, or any other way that hurts not the *Constitution*, my subject was not concerned. In this, as much a lover of singularity as he is pleased to represent me, I believe with my *brethren*. I believe these judgments to be sent for the sins of private men; but so restrained, as not to hurt that great gift of God, a free and equal Government: For here I stop; and still affirm, that if a State be a MORAL AGENT, its actions, *as such*, are those only which make it *accountable*: God, according to my theology, never depriving us of a blessing, he hath been pleased to bestow, till that blessing hath been abused. The very case of the Mosaic economy, which so much misleads the Objector, might, if he had attended to plain facts, have set him right. He might have seen, that, in this Dispensation, if a Particular transgressed in his Ceremonial observances, divine punishment pursued Particulars. When the body of the People disused or had corrupted the holy Ritual, the body of the People suffered. But it was IDOLATRY only which brought destruction on the Republic. For *Idolatry* was the introducing another *Law*; which was *high treason*: it was the transferring their *obedience* from their Supreme Magistrate; which was *rebellion*: Crimes deservedly punished by subjection to a foreign yoke. And this

punishment was inflicted on the State at different periods, both under the administration of their Judges and their Kings. Its last final Overthrow was attended with a general dispersion, which subsists to this very day. And the crime, as the punishment, was the same. For the rejection of the Messiah was a species of this *Treason* and *Rebellion*. *Idolatry* set aside the *Law*; and *Rejection of the Son of God* was setting aside their *supreme Magistrate*, on whom the Father had devolved his Kingly rule and Government. In a word, though the Jewish State was frequently overturned for what are no *crimes of State* with *us*, yet it never suffered for what were no *crimes of State with them*. And this may serve to obviate the charge of Contradiction, which the Objector brings against me, for supposing the *People* are punished for *private Sins*; and yet denying that the *State* incurs the danger of God's judgments for any thing but *public crimes*.

Had the Objector considered all this, and it lay as open to his consideration as it did to mine, his Monsters, both before, and after the flood, might have been well spared: His *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, his *Ninevites*, and the *Seven nations*. Just as pertinent, on this occasion, as the giants *Gog-magog* and *Coryneus*. Having said thus much for the *truth* of my doctrine; One word, if it may be done without offence, concerning its *expediency*. This will be best seen by considering what must be the natural conduct of a good man, on the principles of the Objector, in a State (which he compares to *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*) when so imminently threa-

tened as ours was at the time of my preaching this sermon. Must not such a one, all these circumstances concurring, think us a devoted people? And would he not, in mere piety, deem it a struggling against God, when he fought for the Constitution. What encouragement would be now left him for the discharge of his duty as a Citizen? He is supposed to measure every thing by the Jewish standard. He knows what character history has transmitted to us of those Zealots for their country, who so long opposed the progress of *Titus*'s arms, in the last destruction of *Jerusalem*. These he finds represented as an abandoned crew of miscreants, impiously opposing the fixt destination of Providence: And is it charitable to believe that this *good Christian* of the Objector's making would dare to follow their example? Besides, on such grounds as these, what false theology could not perfect, real poltronry would supply; which, by the aid of a religious principle, would teach men to disguise their Cowardice under the specious show of a pious resignation.

# SERMON XVI.

*Preached on the Thanksgiving Day for the Suppression of the late unnatural Rebellion in* 1746.

2 Cor. iii. 17.

WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY.

THIS is the character St. *Paul* gives of the Gospel in the purity of its profession; that it begets Liberty; the blessing, through which the perfection of our nature is obtained. For, by *Liberty* is to be understood that right and due exertion of our faculties which terminates in Truth and Virtue; The *Slavery* of rational creatures consisting in a subjection to *Vice* and *Error*.

The various kinds of Liberty, thus procured, may be the subject of some less confined Inquiry. On this occasion, I shall consider only one, but that of the nobler sort, Civil Liberty; And shew, from Reason and Fact, that, *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is* this *Liberty*.

I. 1. True

I. 1. TRUE RELIGION, delivered in the Gospel, and called in my text the SPIRIT OF THE LORD, *recommends* and encourages a LIBERTY OF ENQUIRY; and supports and *indulges* the free exercise of Conscience. But men practised in the exertion, and habituated to the enjoyment, of these RELIGIOUS RIGHTS, can never long continue ignorant, or bear with patience the invasion, of their CIVIL. The human faculties can never long remain in so violent and unnatural a state, as to have their operations perpetually defeating one another, by the contrary actions of two such opposite Principles, as those of *freedom* and *restraint*. The one or other must, in a little time, overcome. Either the inveterate *spirit of tyranny* will viciate the purity of Religion, and introduce that blind submission of the understanding, and slavish compliance of the Will into the CHURCH, which it exacts in the State; Or else the *spirit of the Lord* will break down the barrier of an unequal, despotic power, and bring into the STATE, as well as Church, *a free and reasonable service*.

2. TRUE RELIGION teaches, that its *End* is the HAPPINESS OF MAN; in opposition to all the superstitious fancies of the *false*; which place it in the arbitrary, the selfish, or the capricious manifestation of God's power, or interest, or glory. And this naturally leading us to the *end* of civil Government, will direct us how to form a *right* Constitution, when we have, by the foregoing Principle of free inquiry, already detected the injustice of

of the *wrong*; which professes to make the People, for the sake of the Prince.

3. That equitable Policy, by which TRUE RELIGION governs in the Church (and *true*, as well as *false* Religion must always have a Church to govern) will further aid us, when we have now found the *end* of civil community, to attain the *means* likewise, by copying, in civil matters, from that ecclesiastical subordination of authority and limitation of power, where the sovereignty resides in the whole body of the Faithful; Not, as in the administration of corrupt Religion, where a despotic Clergy constitutes the CHURCH.

4. But, above all, That grandeur and elevation of mind, that sublimity of sentiment, that conscious dignity of human nature, which TRUE RELIGION raises; which Holy Scripture dictates; and which the *Spirit of the Lord* inspires, will be ever pushing us forward to the attainment of those CIVIL RIGHTS, which we have been taught to know by reason, are Ours; and which, we have been made to feel by experience, of all Ours, are the most necessary to human happiness.

By these several ways, is the *Spirit of the Lord*, or TRUE RELIGION, naturally productive of the great Blessing, CIVIL LIBERTY. But turn now to the reverse of the medal; and there we shall find the antipart of this divine truth; and read in as clear characters, that *where the Spirit of* POPERY *is, there is* SLAVERY.

Instead

Instead of freedom of inquiry and uncontrolled liberty of Conscience; instead of making the end of Religion human happiness; instead of an equitable administration of Church policy; instead of that elevation of mind and conscious dignity of Human nature; we are here presented with a blind submission of the understanding; with a forced compliance of the will; and with absurd and superstitious doctrines concerning God's despotic and capricious government; imitated, in its own HIERARCHY; and administered by an ambitious and corrupt Clergy, who labour to establish narrowness of thought, lowness of sentiment, and base and abject conceptions of MAN, created *after* GOD's *own Image*.

II. I proceed now to my second point; namely, to confirm the foregoing observations, by FACT: From which likewise it will be seen, how naturally *true* Religion is productive of civil Liberty.

1. When the fierce and free nations of the North dismembered and tore in pieces the ROMAN EMPIRE, they established themselves in their new conquests, on one common principle of policy; in which, the LIBERTY OF THE PEOPLE made, as it ought to do, the Base, and operating Power. And, erected on so just a plan, these GOTHIC Governments might have stood till now, had not the rank influence of PAPAL SUPERSTITION so vitiated those generous Policies, that, when the great instruments of Reformation first appeared, they saw the Western world

world as deeply lost in *civil*, as, in that from which they were appointed to free it, *ecclesiastic* slavery. For the triumphant *Hierarchy* had amply revenged the fallen Empire on the necks of its destroyers. But it was now wonderful to observe, how equal a pace, the civil and the religious Reformations kept with one another. Wherever the influence of the GOSPEL reached, it never failed to redress the exorbitancies of Government: While those places which continued sunk in SUPERSTITION, still groaned under the weight of civil oppression: In a word, the æra of political and religious freedom was the same: So general is the truth of my text, that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

2. To this perhaps it may be objected, That as the Reformation of religion on the Continent was generally the work of the populace, and sometimes carried on in a very tumultuary way, it is more reasonable to ascribe the consequent regulations in the State to this lucky *circumstance* of popular fervour, than to any *natural influence* of the Gospel. But this objection will be seen to have little weight as we come nearer home: Here we shall find, that Reformation produced the same happy fruits, in *England*, where it was begun and perfected by the Prince; who can hardly be supposed to have formed designs of liberty, in favour of the People, against himself. What regulations, therefore, in the balance of power, succeeded the reformation of the Church, we must needs ascribe to the sole influence of

of true Religion. Now, when the first foundations of it were laid amongst ourselves, we knew little more of civil liberty than the name. For though, in *Magna Charta*, we had a kind of *Original Compact*, as the last appeal of the People; Though the historical and legal records of our Constitution declared us to be a free Nation; And though we had, from time to time, asserted our right to freedom, as in *claims at law*, to prevent forfeiture from prescription; yet was the balance of power so ill adjusted, by that undue *inclination* which SUPERSTITION had made in property; and by the more hurtful *separation* it had established between the temporal and spiritual Interests, that public liberty lay at the mercy of a Court cabal, composed of Churchmen and Ministers of state; where it had rarely room to breathe, but when the two interests quarrelled among themselves; which they neve rdid, but when the crown refused to share the tyranny with the mitre.

Add to this, that he who fixed this foundation was a luxurious sanguinary tyrant*; who, tricked and deluded by the Court of *Rome* in a scandalous pursuit of a papal *dispensation*, threw off in a rage the

* —" For Henry the Eighth; if all the pictures and " patterns of a merciless prince were lost in the world, " they might all again be painted to the life, out of the " story of this king. How many servants did he ad- " vance in haste, but for what virtue no man could " suspect; and, with the change of his fancy, ruined " again, no man knowing for what offence? How many " wives

the bishop of *Rome*'s usurped supremacy: And, by that act, notwithstanding the accession of a NEW SUPREMACY to himself, laid the first step to the destruction of his own exorbitant power in the State. In which we can never sufficiently admire and adore the rectifying Hand of Heaven; who made arbitrary power his instrument to lay the foundations of Liberty; and employed the impious pretensions of the *Romish* see to introduce Reformation.

3. From this time of *Gospel light*, a CONSTITUTION became seen and understood: And the Church made no advance to its original purity, but the State was the better for it, in some additional security to public liberty. In a word, their interests were now found to be so inseparable, and the aid they lent each other so reciprocal, that, whenever the COMMON ENEMY formed schemes to the prejudice of the *one*, He always began with some attempts against the *other*. Thus, when the two first Princes of the house of STUART aimed at a despotic power in the State, they first endeavoured to vitiate the simplicity and freedom of reformed Religion, by the pomp of *Worship*, and the servility of *papal Discipline*. And again, when the two last of that unhappy House laboured to restore the *Romish* superstition, they tried to pave the way by a *power of dispensing with the laws*.

In

" wives did he cut and cast off, as his fancy and af-
" fection changed? How many princes of the blood,
" with a world of others of all degrees, did he execute?
" Yea in his very death-bed," &c. Ralegh's Pref. to his Hist. of the World.

In the first of these important struggles, the defence of our happy constitution was intrusted to the LAITY: In the latter, it was assumed by the CLERGY. And were we to judge only by events, these would be enough to expose the injustice of that clamour so frequently raised against our Order by the common enemies of our holy Faith, "that "in all matters wherein public liberty is concerned, "the Clergy, either through malice or ignorance, so "embroil and defeat the counsels of honest men, "as shews they are inveterate enemies, or at "least very unfit agents, of the *common rights of* "*subjects.*"

But I will not take this advantage. Nor does their cause or character require it. The truth (and truth can never hurt them) was this, The LAITY were new in the trade of opposition. They felt their grievances too sensibly: They resented them too warmly. They had suffered under many repeated acts of injustice; and the frequent promises of redress, which they had procured by a constant attention to their trust, they had seen as often violated. Successful opposition made the Spirit of liberty run high: and distrust and jealousy hindered them from finding any other safety than in arms; though satisfaction had been already procured by the ordinary, legal way, of the Constitution. What followed was all madness and despair: till anarchy and confusion shut up the dreadful scene of JURIDICAL murders and SPIRITUAL impieties. But, see now, the efficacy of Liberty and true Religion, when they have mingled their powers together! The ruined Constitution

rose

rose again more suddenly than it fell: But, rising out of a chaos, by the sole force of its natural virtue, unassisted by the experienced hand of Policy to form and proportion its parts, it revived with the same imperfections that had occasioned all the preceding calamities. A melancholy presage, that the friends of liberty were not yet gotten to the end of their labours. Such was the miscarriage of the LAITY.

But now the CLERGY, when it came to their turn, on a later occasion, to stand in the gap against oppression, had learned the great art of putting their Enemy * in the wrong, by forbearing to excite the people to the last remedy of the Constitution, till He had plainly shewn that he was inexorable, by arming himself with a *divine right* to govern against Law. And even then, grown wiser by former errors, both of their own and of the *Laity*, they conducted themselves so sagely, and directed others so temperately, that they not only recovered the Establishment from the brink of ruin, but enabled the Legislature to repair and perfect those defects and weaknesses which had so often brought it into that condition. This gave a new birth to the Constitution, and fixed it on that solid basis of liberty on which we now enjoy it; and which nothing, but our own follies, can unsettle. For though it may be stirred or shaken by the application of any trifling power, yet, like that ancient image of its state, the *rocking-stones* of our ancestors the DRUIDS, no

* James II.

united force can remove it from its centre. For that exactness of balance which subjects it to the first appearance of danger, secures it from all real and substantial injuries.

Amongst the benefits this new Establishment produced, the CHURCH received, as it well deserved, its share; which was the removing from it that scandal to true religion, *restraint on the consciences of men.* But the Church of *Christ* never receives a courtesy from the State, that it does not, sooner or later, repay with interest. Of which it hath given us an instance in the unnatural rebellion just now suppressed: when every thing that is dear to us came suddenly, nobody knows how, into hazard; and was, by the valour and conduct of a brave young Prince, under the manifest guidance of Providence, as suddenly retrieved. At this important juncture, no order of men better approved themselves to the State than the body of the Clergy; though all exerted an unusual vigour for its preservation. And to this wise and happy attachment, of a WHOLE PEOPLE TO A CONSTITUTION, was owing, next to the distinguished protection of Heaven, the preservation of *British* liberty, and in that, of the liberties of MANKIND.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew, from REASON and FACT, how naturally true Religion produceth civil freedom: and, when produced, how strongly it supports it. Which is a sufficient answer to the dull invectives of ignorant or malicious Libertines, against *Christianity* and its *Ministers*; as if both were

were obnoxious and unfriendly to the cause of liberty; as if the end of Religion was to chain down slavery on us by conscience; and the business of the Clergy only to fasten the rivets. On the contrary, we have seen, under the first head, how auspicious the true Faith is to free Government; and under the second, how faithfully devoted the Ministers of that Faith are to its interests.

It will be said, perhaps, that their merit to the State was very equivocal at the *Revolution*; the time when they most pride themselves in their service to it: For that their great object was the CHURCH: with little regard to the civil Establishment; whose reformation they retarded, if not endangered, by that absurd system of SUCCESSION, which they had been long instilling; and whose infection then worked strongly to the disturbance of that august assembly then solemnly *convened* for settling the nation.

To which I answer, it is no wonder, the Clergy should be most solicitous about what was their proper care; what they best understood; and what was then deemed to be in most danger: That if they knew little of the nature and rights of Society, they might be well excused, as they had been misled by a set of COURT DIVINES, who had betrayed and sacrificed the Principles of the REFORMERS, to the practices of *James* and *Charles* the First's Ministers; and as they had never been taught by *experience*, the blessings of a free Government, regulated upon true principles. Nor is this candid representation at the

expence of justice: For when now become happy by a Constitution, which they themselves had so largely contributed to procure, they manifested, by their early and unanimous assistance, in the late danger to the State, that they know as well how to prize the benefits of free Government, as the blessings of pure Religion.

On the whole, therefore, whether we consider the genius of Religion, or the conduct of its Ministers, we must needs conclude, That *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

## II.

But REVELATION rarely gives us one Truth to contemplate, without enabling REASON to pursue the argument, to the discovery of another. So it is in the case before us. The very PROOF of this apostolic proposition, that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*, shews the fact to be inverted; and, that WHERE LIBERTY IS, THERE IS THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD, *i. e.* that civil liberty is favourable to, and naturally productive of, true Religion. For if, as hath been said, true Religion be auspicious to civil liberty by the similar PRINCIPLE on which both are established; by the same MAXIMS on which both are administered; by the like END to which both are directed; and by the same ENLARGEMENT *of the human faculties*, which both naturally produce; it will then follow, that *civil liberty is equally auspicious to true religion:* So that whichever

whichever be the first established, it will, when all foreign impediments are away, make room for, and introduce the other *.

This

* En regardant la Religion simplement du côté de la politique, il paroit que la PROTESTANTE est la plus convenable aux *republiques* et aux *monarchies*; elle s'accorde le mieux avec cet esprit de LIBERTE qui fait l'essence des premieres: car dans un état ou il faut des négocians, des laboureurs, des artisans, des soldats, des sujets en un mot, il est sur que des citoiéns, qui font vœu de laisser périr l'espéce humaine, deviennent pernicieux. Dans les monarchies, la *religion protestante*, qui ne releve de personne, est entierement soumise au gouvernement; au lieu que la *catholique* établit un état spirituel, tout-puissant, fécond en complots et en artfices dans l'état temporel du prince; que les prêtres qui dirigent les consciences, et qui n'ont de supérieur que le pape, sont plus maîtres des peuples que la souverain qui les gouverne, et que par une addresse à confondre les intérêts de Dieu avec l'ambition des hommes, le pape s'est vu souvent en opposition avec des souverains sur des sujets qui n'étoient aucunement du ressort de l'Eglise. *Memoirs de la Maison de Brandebourg*, p. 276. *ed.* 8vo.

It is pleasant enough likewise to see another writer, the celebrated M. Voltaire, a very good Catholic, whom a *philosophic Spirit*, an' please you, *l'esprit vraiment philosophique*, has taught to despise REVELATION; to see him, I say, bring this very truth to discredit both the *Gospel* and the *Reformation*. The *latter*, in his opinion, only reviving that REPUBLICAN SPIRIT in the West of Europe, which the other first kindled in Greece and Asia. " Ne pourroit-on pas trouver peut-être l'origine de cette " nouvelle peste qui a ravagé la terre [la fureur des " guerres de Religion] dans L'ESPRIT REPUBLICAIN qui

This inverted truth is, on this side as well as on the other, confirmed likewise by *Fact*. The Christian Religion, on its first appearance, making its earliest and readiest way, through the free cities of *Greece* and *Lesser Asia*.

But to bring the matter home to the present occasion; let us just take a view of the advantages which civil freedom affords for the exertion of the *Spirit of the Lord*, both in *faith and practice*, by means of the two great principles of LIBERTY and JUSTICE; on which, a free State is founded and administered.

1. The

" anima les premieres Eglises? Les assemblées secrettes,
" qui braivoient d'abord dans des eaves & dans des
" grottes l'autorité des Empereurs Romains, formerent
" peu-à-peu un etat dans l'etat. C'etoit un REPUBLIQUE
" eachée au milieu de l'Empire.—Les anciennes opinions
" RENOUVELLES depuis par LUTHER, par ZWINGLE,
" par CALVIN, tendoient pour la plupart à detruire l'au-
" torité *Episcopale*, & même la puissance *Monarchique*.
" C'est une des principales causes séerettes, qui firent
" reçevoir ces dogmes dans le nord de l'Allemagne où
" l'on craignoit d'être *asservi* par les Empereurs. Ces
" opinions triompherent en Suede & en Danemarck,
" pays où les peuples étoient *libres* sous des Rois. Les
" ANGLOIS, DANS QUI LA NATURE A MIS L'ESPRIT
" D'INDEPENDANCE, les adopterent—Elles penetrérent
" en Pologne, et y firent beaucoup de progres dans *les*
" *seules villes où le peuple n'est point esclave*. La Swisse
" n'eut pas de peine à les reçevoir, parce qu'elle etoit
" *Republique*. Elles furent sur le point d'être établies
" à Venise par la même raison—Les Hollandois ne
" prirent cette Religion, que quand ils *secouerent le joug*

" de

1. The first advantage ariseth from the allowance of free inquiry, which the maintenance of the rights of conscience disposeth men to make in religious matters. By this employment, we come of course to the Author of Truth and to the profession of his Religion in its PURITY: This was the case of those, who took the liberty before it was allowed them: Nor was their labour vain. They dug through the rubbish of papal superstition, till they came to the pure fountain of Gospel truth. FREE INQUIRY can never fairly, and of itself, terminate in UNBELIEF. Infidelity is the natural product of restraint and spiritual tyranny, when borne by us with suspicion and reluctance. For then we are apt to reflect, and to reason on the truth and fitness of the things imposed. And the least attention is sufficient to convince us of the absurdity of what we find thus violently established. But restraint not affording us the *means*, nor slavery the *courage* to penetrate

" de l'Espagne. Genève *devint un Etat populair, en* " *devenant Calviniste* *." Here he owns, that as, in the former instances, Civil Liberty procured Reformation, so in this of Geneva, Reformation procured Civil Liberty. His assignation of the *cause* and *effect* is not exact. Reformation was the *cause* in Holland and some other places as well as in Geneva. However, you have here an Enemy of Revelation bearing testimony to these great truths, that WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY; and that where liberty is, there *the Spirit of the Lord* will not be long absent.

* Le Siécle de Louis XIV. Tom. II. p. 185. Lond. 1753, 8vo.

penetrate through inveterate errors into truth, we run with blind resentment into a brutal infidelity; hurried forward by that common infirmity of the unstayed mind, which perpetually inclines it to fall from one extreme to another. Hence it is we see *France* and *Italy* overrun with the worst kind of *Deism*. There our travelling Gentry first picked it up for a rarity. And, indeed, at first, without much malice. It was brought home in a cargo of new fashions: and worn, for some time, with that levity by the importers, and treated with that contempt by the rest, as suited, and was due, to the apishness of foreign manners: Till a set of solemn blockheads, grown insolent by liberty, and malicious by unsuccessful attempts towards distinction, abused the indulgence of a free Government, in reducing those vague impieties into a system. And so it was, that licentious ignorance came to be distinguished with the name of FREE-THINKING. Thus *liberty abused*, we see, comes to the same issue with *liberty oppressed*. They both terminate in IGNORANCE, with this only difference, that the one is the ignorance of the *Few*, and the other the ignorance of the *Many*. But that these are not the genuine fruits of liberty, appears from the example of the best and wisest Men, whom it hath ever conducted to the knowledge and belief of Revelation.

2. Nor is civil liberty less friendly to the MORALITY, than to the DOCTRINE, of the Gospel. The Government of a free State is administered by a system of equal Laws; founded in the general maxims

maxims of Justice; and objective to the Common good. For all States are administered by the same principles on which they are erected. Now a habitude to such laws must needs enable men to judge more truly, and to think more favourably, of the *morality* of the Gospel; solely calculated to promote the peace, and to multiply the blessings of mankind. For as to that inconsistence, between the maxims of POLICY and RELIGION, so affectedly insinuated by those who would palliate their vicious practice, or recommend their impious opinions, it is no where to be found, but in the administration of despotic Governments, or of those mongrel free ones, which, forsaking the genius of their institution, act like such as are most arbitrary. And, indeed, how could the maxims of *Policy* and *Religion* be inconsistent? Unless there were DIFFERENT ROADS to *happiness here*, as the supporters of this paradox pretend there are, to *happiness hereafter*. But since the temporal good of Man, whether rising, as in *Religion*, from the acts of particulars to the whole; or descending, as in *society*, from the acts of the whole to particulars; since this, I say, can only be procured by the application of the same invariable principles of NATURAL JUSTICE, we must needs conclude, That true Policy and Religion are not only perfectly consistent, but (as was the purpose of the foregoing account to shew) mutually beneficent.

These reciprocal advantages, arising from the very Being and Nature of either institution, are

one

one part of that mutual aid and support, so much spoken of, which Religion and civil Government lend to one another.

A *second* springs from the natural influence of their respective powers: And there is yet a *third*, which is derived from the artificial application, and interchange of those powers. But of the two latter parts, I have elsewhere discoursed at large *; and mention them in this place for no other purpose than to give light to an acknowledged Fact, employed to enforce the application, proper for this glad solemnity, in which we celebrate the divine mercies for our late providential deliverance.

## III.

Now the sense of these mercies should always rise in proportion to the consciousness of our own demerit. And this will naturally draw us to that only acceptable return of service, *The reformation of our lives and manners.*

The unhappy condition of human things makes the greatest goods of providence most liable to abuse. The moral State of the People is now felt by all, and apprehended by many. For, blessed be God, our condition is not yet so desperate as to render us insensible.

It is a FREE Government only that attains the *end* of Government; which is, so to improve the mind and accommodate the body, as to make a

* See The Alliance between Church and State.

rational

rational life safe and elegant. Its *equity* allows free inquiry, which leads to truth; and its *policy* encourages commerce, which produces plenty. But men grown wanton by prosperity, abuse the liberty of thinking, and the fruits of industry; so as to indulge every wanton fancy of the mind, and every vicious appetite of the body. From hence arise INFIDELITY and LUXURY, the two capital evils of our infatuated countrymen.

The height, to which they are both arrived, cannot be aggravated; and need not be particularly described. The case is notorious, and confessed. So that nothing remains, on this occasion, but to exhort you, from motives of the utmost consequence, now at length after Religion hath done so much for you, in producing liberty, to let liberty do its part, and produce *the Spirit of the Lord*; that is, a reverential *regard* for that which gave birth to liberty, Revealed Religion, and a *moderate* use (such as even natural Religion prescribes) of these good things, which Commerce, the offspring of liberty, hath procured for us.

1. We may consider, therefore, in the first place, how unsuitable it is to the nature of civil Freedom to fall back into the slavery of vice and error, to which tyranny had kept men enthralled. The excellency of civil Freedom consists in its power of emancipating the mind as well as body; and making the whole man dependent on himself. For what matters it to be exempted from the chains of a precarious tyrant, if we still continue slaves to the caprice

caprice of our own corrupt nature? We are freed by Providence from the unjust dominion of a Master, that we may *enjoy* the blessings of Nature in that just measure in which they are bestowed upon us. But can this be done amidst the excesses of *Luxury* and *Irreligion?* The *enjoyment* of good implies *pleasure* in its use. But all pleasure arises from these two sources, the *passive sensation* and the *reflex act*. In the first, *moderation* constitutes the pleasure. For those agreeable sensations, which the appetite to good provokes, and the possession of it gratifies, are all lost and dissipated by *excess*; which produces, instead of pleasure, disgust and loathing; every racking distemper of the body, and every inflamed passion of the mind. From the second source, the *reflex act*, arises our grateful meditation on the Giver. And what generous mind is there whose pleasure, in the moderate use of worldly things, is not doubled by the consideration of their flowing from the kindness of a friend, whose affection for us is always operating for our good? How high then must be the raptures of the religious man, who considers all he enjoys as the gift of Him who gave him life, and preserves him in being. But all this pleasure *Irreligion* destroys; and leaves nothing in its stead, but an unsatisfactory indulgence of the grosser appetites; much below the brutal, as it is haunted with the dismal apprehensions, of a miserable reverse: a reverse not in his power either to prevent or retard, as it is, upon his own wretched principles, the caprice of Chance, or the fixed order of Destiny;

which

which is for ever clouding or shifting the scene. Thus unsuitable to the ends of *Freedom* are vice and error.

They are no less inconsistent with the character of a *Free-man*. It is the Free-man's glory to have vindicated the dignity of human nature, in shaking off oppression, and becoming his own master. This is indeed his glory. But if he stop here, his sweat and blood are spent in vain. Had he a body only to take care of, he had done his work, when he secured it from outward violence. But Humanity is not an empty carcass. Its nobler part is an informing mind; the guide, the director, and final object of its operations. If he suffer this to be brought into subjection, all his boasts of outward Freedom are childish and impotent.

Yet shall this wretched victim of Luxury and Irreligion look high; and pretend to pity the SAVAGE, who hath never got, and despise the SLAVE, who was unable to preserve, the mighty blessings of Social life and Liberty. But let Them speak for themselves: Let us hear them in their turn, and observe how easily they confound his miserable Vanity and Arrogance. —" And why," says the *Savage*, " will you affect to pity me? Do not I " use the gifts of Nature just as you employ the " benefits of Society? Whatever chance hath " thrown in my way, or my honest toil hath pro- " cured, I waste indeed, and devour with an in- " temperate and beastly appetite. But are you " more humane or circumspect, after having amas- " sed the spoils of your Country, or succeeded to

" the

" the patrimony of your Ancestors? You may " disguise, indeed, our common brutality under the " civilized language of *sacrificing to your genius:* " But your riot is the more insufferable, as your " pretended *arts of life* have taught you to pre- " serve, to improve, and to multiply the blessings " of Providence, so as to make the enjoyment " lasting and diffusive. Whereas We waste them " just as we receive them from Nature's hand, " rude and perishable: being as unable to preserve " or improve them, as *to use them with moderation*; " Moderation, that *art of life*, which, sensible " experience tells us, must needs be the leader " and conductor of all the rest. For, whatever " difference there may be, in other respects, be- " tween Society and Savage life, they agree in this, " that want, distress, and misery, are the certain " issue of luxury and riot. But here, the untaught " *Indian* might set you a lesson. The patience*, " the fortitude, and resignation, with which we " bear the wants, we bring upon ourselves, astonish " the civilized beholder. But, if he tell us true, " of what passes in Cities, the issue of your luxury " wears a very different face. The first approaches " of distress make you restless and impatient. " You

* This character of the savage is common to all the natives of South and North America, as our voyagers and missionaries agree.—Gloutons jusqu'à la voracité, quand ils ont de quoi se satisfaire; sobres, quand la nécessité les y oblige, jusqu'à se passer de tout, sans paroître rien desirer. Relation d'un voyage dans l'Amerique Merid. par M. de la Condamine, p. 52.

" You quarrel with the Government you are so " vain of; you despise the Rulers you have chosen; " you trample on the Laws you had so hotly de- " manded; and, unless the relief be speedy, your " giddy madness drives you on, till you precipitate " yourselves into that condition, you so much affect " to pity, a *State of Nature:* Indeed, so cir- " cumstanced, of all conditions the most pitiable. " For this which, with us, is a *State of Peace*, is, " with you, as both the politician holds, and the " people feel, a *state of war and madness*, where " every man's hand is set against his God and his " brother." Thus might the Savage answer.

Nor has the Slave of arbitrary power loss advantages in this contention, while he thus addresses this vain idolater of liberty; " You triumph in your " generous exploits; when, in vindication of your " own freedom, you retrieved, what you call, the " scandal of human nature, the lying patiently at " the foot of a tyrant. But cease these empty " brags, and attend to your gains. What have " you got, good man! by shaking off oppression? " Have you shaken off, with it, those Impieties " that make oppression heavy, and Slavery indeed " a scandal? If the plague-sore of irreligion, that en- " demic evil of despotic governments, still continues " to corrupt your notions, how miserable is your " boasted freedom! You are only accumulating " guilt, while you thought to reap the fruit of your " labour. Glory or profit you can pretend to none. " That fortitude of reason, which led you to Li- " berty, hath *betrayed* you in the pursuit of Truth: " and

" and those unsightly errors you have embraced " in its stead, suffer you not to *enjoy* the blessing " you had so greatly purchased. You borrow our " vices, while you despise the slavery that produced " them; not considering that our abject state affords " some excuse for these disorders, which your " happier situation renders unpardonable. You " have light to lead you to the source of truth; you " have liberty to profess it. Error is of a piece with " the rest of our fortunes. And if, like beasts of " burthen, we are to move as our conductors drive " us, it is something more tolerable to drudge on " blindfold, than to have the uneasy prospect of a " better way, which we are not permitted to pur- " sue." Thus far with justice, might those, we most pity and despise, recriminate upon us.

In a word, without freedom from *vice* and *error*, the rest is but the shadow of liberty. At best, but as the ornaments of dress to a distempered body, absurd and cumbersome; though, to one in strength and vigour, they become the preservation of health, and the improvement of natural beauty.

2. But if what we owe Ourselves and the dignity of our common nature will not move us; we should, at least, consider what we owe to *Providence*. Our case, how light soever we may make of it, is a little uncommon. We find ourselves in possession of the greatest human good, CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, at a time when almost all the rest of mankind lie in slavery and error. This is no ordinary mercy. Nor is this conceit the effect of that vulgar

vulgar prejudice to *country* or *opinions*, which always inclines men to overrate their own advantages. It is a Fact, we feel: a Fact, we see: a truth which all the conclusions of reason support; and the united voice of experience confirms. So that if there be any thing certain, this is not to be disputed, That we *Englishmen* (how unworthy soever) are at present most indebted to Providence of the whole race of mankind.

Nor is this all. The bestowing these blessings on us was but the *earnest* of God's favour to us. His election of us for the instruments of his glory is more clearly seen in his preservation of us, at every important crisis, when human power and policy, as in our late deliverance, seemed combined to our destruction. Of which, whoever doubts, must be either very ignorant of our history, or very ready to call in question God's moral government. Not that we are to fancy ourselves, on these accounts, the peculiar favourites of Heaven. But rather that we hear it speaking to us, as it did sometimes to the *Jews*, *I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake.* It is possible we may be selected by Providence, in these latter ages, to preserve the memory of civil liberty amidst a slavish world, as the *house of Israel* was formerly, to keep alive true religion amidst an universal apostasy. And, if this be the case, we betray our trust as well as forfeit our obligations, when we neglect to make a suitable return.

But, on whatever footing we receive our blessings, our debt of gratitude is the same: which, at this

time especially, calls upon us to consider seriously how we shall best address ourselves to discharge it. Right reason tells, that the most acceptable way of returning God's mercies, is to apply them to the attainment of that *further good*, which they are capable of producing: Especially when, in the nature of things, the mercies given are only the MEANS; and that *further good* is the END. We have shewn, that CIVIL LIBERTY does, above all other blessings, afford us the largest helps to the improving ourselves in the *principles* and *practice* of TRUE RELIGION. How desperate then is our ingratitude, if we neglect to make the best use of so happy a situation! a situation which enables us to advance as far beyond our neighbours in piety and virtue, as we are placed above them in liberty and power: And if, instead of applying these advantages to the purposes for which they were intended by Nature, and directed by Providence, it should be found we have only abused them to the inflaming our impiety and luxury, what name can be given to so horrid a profanation! an abuse of God's mercies so strangely unnatural, that though experience makes it familiar to us, yet retired Reason stands aghast at so inexpiable a prodigy.

3. But however indulgent we may be to those idle notions in *theology*, which promise us impunity for our transgressions of the *law of God*; we yet would blush to be thought so ignorant in *philosophy*, as not to know, that there is no escaping [illegible] in which follows the violated *order of things*.

NATURE,

NATURE, to which our libertines fly, from the GOD OF MERCY, is more stubborn and vindictive. We have shewn the mutual aid and support which true religion and civil liberty impart to one another; and the necessary connexion established between them. We always find, that when civil liberty is gone, the *religion of the sovereign* takes place; that is, any kind of superstition fitted to the support of arbitrary power: and slaves are ready to receive even the worst. Again, the fall of true religion, whether betrayed by *Superstition* or suffering open violence by *Infidelity*, draws after it the destruction of civil liberty.

How *Superstition* helps it on, hath been shewn in the former part of this discourse: and how *Infidelity* (that is, a contempt both of the principles and practice of religion) precipitates its ruin, is seen by all who understand what effects *impiety* hath on the *security*; and *luxury* on the *stability* of Government. These are old beaten topics, which the common sense of mankind hath made current in all ages.

## IV.

I shall attempt, therefore, to illustrate and inforce this truth (which one may justly reckon amongst the first principles of true politics) by an observation not so commonly attended to, "That though *Im-*" *piety* and *Luxury* be the certain bane of civil "society in general, yet they are more speedily "destructive of a FREE STATE."

The two immediate supports of Government against inward and outward violence, are PUNISHMENT *of offenders*, and FUNDS *for the public expence*. Now, irreligion and luxury hinder a *free State*, more than any other, from making these necessary provisions: as, in such a State, the *conviction* of the guilty, and the *exaction* of subsidies, are regulated and restrained by equal and established laws.

The enlarged wants, and inflamed appetites of men in social life, have so improved their cunning in the arts of secret injustice, as to evade all the force and resentment of human statutes. Here Religion comes in aid of the Law, to frighten men, by the terror of an invisible Judge, from those crimes which escape the notice of the Magistrate.

Now, take off this restraint, and see the different effects it will have upon a *free*, and a *despotic* Government. The Latter hath found, in the very genius of its constitution, a speedy and vigorous remedy to this evil, by (what goes for nothing with an arbitrary Magistrate) the violation of natural justice, in the use of the rack, and conviction on doubtful evidence. Which, though perhaps begun in the wantonness of power, repeated to gratify some oblique interest, and continued out of habit, were at length found so necessary a balance to disorder, where Religion had lost its hold, that it became a maxim in these sorts of Governments, "that it was "better ten innocent men should suffer, than that "one offender should escape." And on this maxim, they have long regulated their administration of civil justice.

On

On the other hand, a *free State*, not only denounceth the crimes it punishes, by written Laws, but prescribes and adjusts the proof of them by explicit modes of invariable practice. While the prosecution of them is carried on by established Forms, regulated on public equity, and the national justice of a whole community. This, with all its general uses for the security of particulars, cannot but embolden the secret contrivers of evil: which our Law seems to have been aware of when it endeavoured to hide the inconvenience under a maxim founded in its natural lenity, "that it is better twice "ten guilty persons should escape, than one inno-"nocent man suffer *." A maxim, though becoming the genius and dignity of a free Society; yet at the same time it betrays the want of some restraining Principle, which may co-operate with human Laws. So that when Religion is gone, which only can afford a principle adequate to this service, we see in what a desperate condition the best Governments, because they are the best, will be left.

Again, with regard to the support of Government against foreign injuries. In a free State the public subsidies are the act of a delegated legislature; and so of course, the voluntary contributions of the People: Which generally will be restrained in too light a proportion to their abilities, rather than extended to the necessities of the occasion. Now

* Mallem revera viginti facinorosos mortem pietate evadere, quam justum unum injuste condemnari. FORTESCUE, de Laudibus Legum Angliæ, C. xxvii.

when a free People are debauched by luxury, and impoverished by the expence which must feed and supply their excesses; and consequently, are become both unwilling and unable to answer the public demands, To what distress must the State, in such exigencies, be reduced?

But it is not thus in a land of slaves: where the blood and sweat of the people make part of their Master's exchequer: Where what is deemed the wealth of the Country to-day, becomes the Court-treasure to morrow: where money, by the magic of arbitrary power, is transformed into fairy favours; of one value when issued out; and of another when called in again.

Now this being the consequence of the ESTABLISHED ORDER OF THINGS, it is no wonder it should be inevitable. For why did God establish this order, but to fix such bounds of right and wrong as should serve for the direction of mankind? On the contrary, might events happen out of, or contrary to, this course, then would God's providence no longer govern, nor man's purposes have any aim; but the *moral* world would fall into a chaos as incapable of observing the law ordained for its direction, as the *natural* was in that state from which the almighty fiat awaked it, and called it forth for creation.

On the whole then, my brethren, if you have any regard to your character of free subjects to a lawful Prince, of grateful worshippers of a beneficent God, or of rational dependents on a well-ordered System; you will, in good earnest, set upon reforming

forming those horrid abuses which make vicious Free-men a scandal to those sacred relations. Remember, you are called upon by all that is excellent in Humanity, by all that is holy in Religion, and by all that is right and fit in the Order of things. And should you still continue deaf to the united voice of *Nature* and *Grace*, that which is out of Nature, and reprobate to Grace, the only things you have left, atheistic CHANCE or FATE, will prove utterly unable to snatch you from this impending ruin.

# SERMON XVII.

## ON THE NATURE OF THE MARRIAGE UNION.

MATT. xix. 6.

WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER.

GOD, as *Creator* of the World, is Author of the *constitution of* NATURE; and as *moral Governor* of the World, he is Author of the *constitution of* GRACE. It is impiety, therefore, in man to attempt any alterations in either System: whether it be by *putting asunder what God hath joined together*, the crime here forbidden; or by joining together what God hath put asunder; which is generally the next step in this progress of human folly. For when men have dissolved the established combinations made by God, their preceding interests invite them, or their subsequent necessities draw them on, to make others of their own.

I shall first explain the Precept of my text in its general import: and then consider it as applied to the particular occasion on which it was delivered.

Amongst

Amongst the more important combinations in the *constitution of Nature*, God hath *joined together*, as CAUSE AND EFFECT, Virtue and Happiness, Vice and Misery. Now should the CIVIL MAGISTRATE so far forget his office of GOD's Delegate, as to annex rewards to Vice, and punishment to Virtue, he would incur the double guilt of *putting asunder what God hath joined together*, and of joining together what he had put asunder.

Again, God hath joined together, as RELATIVE AND CORRELATIVE, Children's obedience to their Parents, and Parents' care and support of their Children. Here too should the CIVIL MAGISTRATE, like the Jewish Priests with their *Corban*, infringe upon the first, on pretence that the Public had need of all the Children's service; and on the latter, on pretence that it hath need of the purses of the Parent; he would be equally guilty of this impiety.

All attempts to separate what God hath joined together in the *constitution of Grace* hath the same wickedness and folly. God hath joined together, AS THE FOUNDATION AND SUPERSTRUCTURE of one Church in Christ, the Jewish and the Gospel dispensations. But should PARTICULARS, when embarrassed and perplexed with difficulties arising from certain circumstances in the Jewish History and Religion, presume to violate this connexion, by denying any necessary dependence of Christianity upon it: what would this be but the profane separation here condemned?

Again,

Again, God hath joined together, AS THE GIFT AND THE CONDITION OF IT, Belief in Jesus the Messiah, and everlasting life. A connexion, which, in the language of Divines, is called *justifying Faith*. But should PARTICULARS, from their ignorance, their imperfect conception of the true nature of the Christian dispensation, or from the injury which the abuse of this doctrine hath occasioned to virtue and morality, venture to deny that it is *faith alone which justifies*, such men would assuredly incur all the guilt of this impious separation.

This is but a small specimen of the numerous cases which might be given of the folly and perversity of men, in rebelling against God, and violating the constitution of NATURE, and the economy of GRACE. But it is enough to shew what mischiefs attend, and what impieties accompany, the separating by human will, or by human Authority, what God by his will, or his nature, hath joined and united. For what can be conceived more destructive than to violate the settled order of things; or more impious than to counterwork the designs of Him who established that order?

But to come to the particular occasion of the precept.

The Law of Moses, for the wise ends of Providence, indulged the *Israelites* in the use of *Polygamy* and *Divorce*. These, which were allowed them for the *hardness of their hearts*, had, by length of time, and the corruption of their manners, still further degenerated into a more licentious abuse:

so as to stand in need of the animadversion of Him who came to *fulfil the Law and the Prophets.*

He more obliquely reforms *Polygamy*, by observing that, at the Creation, the human race began by a *male and female*; and that these were made *man and wife* *. He more directly condemns their practice of *Divorce*, by observing that God had pronounced, *They twain should be one flesh* †. From whence he infers, that *whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery, and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery* ‡: for that God having joined them together on those terms, it was impiety in man to alter the conditions of the contract: *What God* (saith he) *hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*

That it is highly criminal, therefore, for human Authority to put asunder those whom God in matrimony hath made one, is allowed and confessed on all hands.

The only question is, WHEN the two Parties may be said to be THUS *joined together*, or *made one.*

To determine this, we should consider MARRIAGE under all its forms. And, first, in its most simple idea, divested of its relation to *revealed* Religion and *civil* Society.

This union is, in itself, partly *natural*, and partly *social.*

So far as regards the *condition*, that is, the prohibited degrees; and the *end*, the procreation of the species, it holds of *Nature:* In what concerns the

* Ver. 5. † Ibid. ‡ Ver. 9.

mutual

mutual aid and support of the parties, and their distinct claims to certain rights and privileges, it holds of *Society*. But *Nature* and *human Society* alone seem not to have determined either against POLYGAMY or DIVORCE.

*Revealed* Religion and *Civil* Government soon followed. They were introduced to perfect human nature according to their several characters. What additions or regulations they brought with them is next to be considered.

RELIGION declares marriage to be the union of one to one: and the reason given is, that God at first created only one of each sex. It declares the union to be indissolvable; because the female was made out of the substance of the male. And thus marriage, from a *natural*, became a *religious* union.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT requires, that to make *private contracts* (in which Society is affected) valid and binding, they be entered into and executed by prescribed and public forms. 1. Because the ministry of public justice is to compel to the performance of them: so that it is but fit it should prescribe the conditions of the act it is to vindicate. 2. Because some contracts, as this of marriage, have civil rights and privileges annexed unto them.

Thus we see, Marriage is of a MIXED nature; in part a sacred ordinance, in part a human institution. It hath both a *natural*, and a *social* efficacy: Considered in a natural light, as an union of male and female, from whence all the charities of human life arise, it is a *religious* contract: Considered in a social light, as creating new relations and connexions, all of which have their distinct rights and priviliges assigned

assigned to them in civil life, it partakes of a *civil* contract.

This distinction is marked out to us by the nature of things; and confirmed by Laws, divine and human.

What then, it may be asked, are the distinct parts which GOD and the MAGISTRATE claim, as their peculiar, in this solemn contract? It is from God that two are made one by an indissolvable tie: and this is the LAW OF RELIGION. It is from the Magistrate that this Union, ordained by Heaven, is executed by a solemn form prescribed by the State: and this is the LAW OF SOCIETY.

In confirmation of what is here said, it is remarkable that in the Jewish Law, where all even the most minute matters that concern religious rites and ceremonies are circumstantially prescribed; nay, where the most exact directions concerning the legality and illegality of Marriages are delivered; it is remarkable, I say, that there is no *Form* of the marriage-ceremony: though the *Ritual Law* abounds with all other forms that relate to Offerings, Lustrations, and Sacrifices. The same sage economy may be remarked in the Gospel. Though Jesus, as we see, reformed the abusive practices crept into Marriage, yet he prescribes no *Form* for the celebration of it: as he has done for *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. What is this but a plain declaration by the Founders of both Religions, that the *Form* of celebration belongs to the civil Magistrate?

From all this, it necessarily follows, That till this sacred Union, instituted by God in Paradise, be sealed and confirmed by such rites and ceremonies,

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as the wisdom and policies of civil States direct to be observed, God hath not *joined* any Pair *together*, according to his holy ordinance: and that the observance of such rites and ceremonies is essential to that union which he declares to be indissolvable.

To suppose this Union may be *authentically* made in the present state of Religion and Society, without the intervention of the civil Magistrate, leads either to *fanaticism* or *licentiousness*.

The only two conceivable means besides are, Either God's *revelation* of his purpose to the parties concerned, as in the case of the first pair: Or else his *declared* sanctification of the natural desires, and private agreement of those who come together by sensual impulse, without the intervention of the Magistrate's allowance, and the sanction of his co-operating authority; so as to make their private act God's act, and thereby erect it into that religious Union, which he forbids human power to disturb or violate.

To expect God's extraordinary appointment, would be opening the door to a new species of fanaticism, which, inflamed by the most violent of our natural passions, would know no bounds.

To give the prerogatives of a sacred union to the private desires of the two sexes, would disturb Society, by rendering Succession precarious, the Relations which arise from marriage uncertain, and the Rights and prerogatives annexed to them undeterminable.

In a word, the one would dishonour the sanctity of Religion; the other would disorder the harmony

of

of Civil life. And therefore we may be sure God hath not done, nor will do, either one or the other.

We return then to our conclusion, That the marriage-bond which Jesus, in my text, forbids man's presumption to dissolve, is a contract so VIRTUALLY circumstanced as the Laws of Religion ordain; and so FORMALLY executed as the Laws of each particular Society prescribe.

Where either of these requisites are wanting, it is not that Union of which God is pleased to call himself the Author; and which he forbids man, on any other terms than that which the Religion of his Son prescribes, to dissolve.

From these clear *principles*, and this certain *deduction*, we collect the *justice* and Religion, as well as *expedience* and true Policy of a late salutary Law solely calculated for the support and ornament of Society: by which the just rights and Authority of Parents are vindicated; the peace and harmony of families preserved; the irregular appetites of Youth restrained; and the worst and basest kind of seduction encountered and defeated. I mean, that sage provision, whereby all pretended Marriages, not solemnized as the WISDOM OF OUR ANCIENT CONSTITUTION directs, are rendered null and void.

For the dissolution of a mock-marriage not entered into with the previous qualifications the Law of Nature enjoins, nor executed by the public forms which the Laws of Society require, is so far from *putting asunder those whom God hath joined together*, that it it is only breaking an insolent and disorderly confederacy in licentiousness, where God's

God's Sanction and the Magistrate's Authority are equally insulted: and by a crime too which indeed savours the most of that very impiety we are so commendably anxious to avoid: there being nothing which God hath more inseparably united than the *obedience* of Children to the *care and protection* of Parents.

And if the indulgence of former times hath confirmed such irregular and lawless combinations, which this Law condemns and dissolves, it proceeded on wrong and mistaken notions concerning the nature of Marriage. For Popish policy had turned this Union into a Sacrament; and Protestant simplicity had, by way of *interim*, given a kind of authority to those Canons in which the system of that policy was contained. But now, that the true principles of *natural Law* and *revealed Religion* have made this solemn and sacred contract better understood, and that the abuses of it were become intolerable, the wisdom of the Legislature found it necessary to provide the efficacious remedy in question: the only one which, on mature consideration, was found to be effectual. And it is worthy our notice, that this, which was the more immediate object of their care, is contrived with so much provident sagacity, that, had it been their directer purpose to seek a means for restoring the SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE to its ancient honours, we cannot conceive a more effectual method than what this very *remedy* has provided. The things which most contribute to excite reflection, and to impress awe and reverence for any solemn Rite, being all here

scrupulously required; such as previous caution, public notoriety, open celebration, and a well-attested record.

With matters of policy we have nothing to do, any otherwise than as the truths of Religion come in question, by their being actively or passively concerned. And therefore I should here conclude what I had to say on this subject, but that a very material objection to my general argument is supposed to arise from the express words of Scripture. This is within our province; and, I presume, I may be permitted to examine it.

My argument proceeds on this principle, that MARRIAGE being in part a *religious*, and in part a *civil* contract, it must, in order to give it its essential efficacy, be entered into on such terms as Religion enjoins, and completed by such forms as the *Civil* Magistrate prescribes. From whence it is inferred, that the mutual agreement of the two Sexes alone is not sufficient to make a *legitimate Marriage*, either in the sight of GOD or of SOCIETY.

But, to this it is objected, That the *premisses* must needs be false, since St. PAUL hath expressly declared against the *conclusion*. "Know ye not (says "he) that your bodies are the members of *Christ?* "Shall I then take the members of Christ, and "make them the members of an harlot? God "forbid. What, know ye not, that HE WHICH IS "JOINED TO AN HARLOT IS ONE BODY? FOR "TWO (saith he) SHALL BE ONE FLESH. But he "that is *joined to the Lord is one Spirit* *."

* 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16, 17.

"Hence,

" Hence, say the objectors, it appears, that no more than the mutual agreement of the two Sexes to come together is necessary to give this contract its most essential quality, namely, INDISSOLUBILITY, since the Apostle declares that the two sexes meeting, or at least living, in *Concubinage* (a state Societies disallow, and therefore a contract in which the Magistrate doth not interfere) become ONE BODY; the very circumstance which makes an *inseparable union*."

To understand the weight of this objection, we must consider the Apostle's manner of treating his subject.—To shew the great enormity of *fornication* in a professor of the Gospel, he employs, for one of his topics, that essential property of Marriage, the making the two parties, one *flesh* or *body*.

By FORNICATION, we will suppose him to mean frequenting the *Stews*, or that more decent indulgence of the irregular passions called *Concubinage*. And then, according to the sense of the objectors, he lays down this position, *That every whoremonger and harlot become one flesh and one body, by virtue of the holy ordinance of Matrimony instituted in Paradise.* A position, which not only disturbs and violates Society; but, by confounding Concubinage with Marriage, and making them one and the same, leaves the Apostle nothing to argue against, even in the height of his resentment at a criminal association, which this very topic is employed to aggravate.

But this is not all. The Apostle, according to this interpretation, *makes one of two*, where Jesus

*makes two of one.* For the Saviour of the world allows *fornication* for a sufficient cause of *divorce.* So that the crime is made to have two contrary effects at once.

Again, if fornication *makes one, of two*; then, by God's Laws it is both commanded and forbidden. For we are directed to make that union, whereby *two become one*, in the injunction to *increase and multiply*; and yet we are warned, again and again, to *flee fornication.*

Since therefore the sense which supports the objection abounds in these absurdities, we must seek a reasonable meaning elsewhere. That is, in the Author's context, and in the course and tenour of his own reasoning.

St. Paul, in order to expose the enormity of fornication amongst Christians, considers every man as the member of *Christ*'s spiritual body; and every man, living in fornication, as the member of a harlot: a profanation which renders the criminal unworthy of the spiritual union with *Christ.* But then, to make the Corinthians still more sensible of this profanation, he sets before them the *closeness* of that spiritual union; which, in his accustomed manner, he inforces by analogy to the thing propfaning. Just as, in another place of this Epistle, he exposes the profanation of the Lord's supper when joined to an Idol-feast, by a comparison between what those two Rites had, or were supposed to have, in common *. But the union of *Concubinage* not so well

* See the Discourse on the Lord's Supper, in the Xth Volume.

fitting

fitting his purpose as that of *Marriage*, he employs the latter to inforce the enormity of the former, and, without stopping to change the terms, continues the use of the word *Harlot*, to predicate of her, what is strictly true only of a *Wife*, namely, that *he which is joined to her is one body*.

This seems to be a fair account of the Apostle's illustration. And the manner of expressing it is altogether suited to that quickness of conception, and rapidity of argumentation, which distinguish this great Apostle's reasoning. "He was a man "(says Mr. Locke) of quick parts and warm tem- "per; mighty well versed in the writings of the *Old* "*Testament*, and full of the doctrine of the *New*. "All this put together, suggested matter to him in "abundance, on those subjects that came in his "way. So that one may consider him, when he "was writing, as beset with a croud of thoughts, all "striving for utterance. In this posture of mind it "was almost impossible for him to keep a slow "pace, and observe minutely that order and method "of ranging all he said, from which results an "easy and obvious perspicuity.—One may see his "thoughts were all of a piece in his Epistles: his "notions were at all times uniform, and constantly "the same: though his expressions very various. "*In them he seems to take great liberty.* This is "certain, that no one seems *less tied up* to a form "of words *."

The character here given of St. Paul's *knowledge* shews him to be too well versed both in the *Jewish*

* Preface to his Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles.

and *Christian* dispensations to ascribe the *essential attribute* of MARRIAGE to FORNICATION or *concubinage:* and yet his *genius* made him very capable, amidst a torrent of thought and crowd of expression, to use one term for another, which had in them those ideas in common of which he wanted to make use.

But it may be thought perhaps a much easier, as well as juster solution of the difficulty, to suppose that, by FORNICATION, the Apostle meant neither *frequenting the stews*, nor yet *concubinage*; but a *formal marriage*; though within the *Jewish* prohibited degrees.

It is certain that this was the general term which the followers of the Law employed to design such marriages. And we seem to have a very eminent example of it in that famous apostolical decree which commands "to abstain from pollutions of "Idols, and from FORNICATION, and from things "strangled, and from blood *." For this sense of the term removes a difficulty which will for ever embarrass the Decree, while *fornication* is understood to signify *vague lust*; whereby things *positive* and *moral* are confounded, and put upon the same foot of obligation; either making abstinence *from fornication* temporal; or abstinence from *things strangled and from blood*, perpetual.

But in the place in question the sense seems yet more evidently determined. The *fornication*, the subject of this *sixth* Chapter, plainly refers to the *fornication* described in the *fifth*. "It is reported

* Acts xv. 20.

"commonly

" commonly (says the Apostle) that there is for-
" nication amongst you: and such fornication that
" is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles,
" THAT ONE SHOULD HAVE HIS FATHER'S WIFE*."
The crime in question therefore appears to be a MARRIAGE, on the principles of the Jewish Law, incestuous.

And thus the objection, which stands on a supposition that St. Paul is speaking of *concubinage*, in which the marriage-ceremony does not take place, nor consequently the Magistrate interfere, comes to nothing. And let not the Apostle's calling it such a species of fornication, *as was not named amongst the Gentiles*, induce us to think it such a Marriage as the Gentiles esteemed illegal, and consequently an union the civil Magistrate did not authorize, which would bring us round again to *concubinage*, from whence we set out: for by these words he only meant that it was disreputable and scandalous amongst them, not such as was contrary to the Laws †.

* 1 Cor. v. 1.

† " That the marrying of a Son in Law and a Mother
" in Law was not prohibited by the Laws of the Roman
" Empire, may be seen in Tully: but yet it was looked
" on as so scandalous and infamous, that it never had
" any countenance from practice. His words, in his
" oration *pro Cluentio*, § 4. are so agreeable to the pre-
" sent case, that it may not be amiss to set them down.
" *Nubit Genero Socrus, nullis auspiciis, nullis auctoribus.*
" *O scelus incredibile, et, præter hanc unam, in omni vita*
" *inauditum!*" LOCKE, on the place.

The *fornication* then in question was a scandalous *marriage*. And being altogether unsuitable to a Christian's profession, we find * that the offender, on St. Paul's remonstrance, took advantage of the Laws of divorce then in use, to shew his penitence.

All, therefore, we learn from this famous Case, is this general truth, corroborative of the foregoing argument, that where a pretended Marriage is solemnized in defiance of any Law, divine or human, which has a right to regulate the terms of the contract, it never was that union which God declares to be indissolvable, but one virtually void at the very making; and that the enacting its dissolution by a positive Law is only declarative of the Law of right reason and Religion concerning it.

## POSTSCRIPT.

THE tendency of the foregoing Discourse is to shew, that the Legislature, in the Law concerning Marriage, was so far from unsettling the rights of Religion, that it supported and inforced them. The Legislature has, indeed, been defended on other principles.

It has been said, that this Law, which *annuls* illegal Marriages, concerns itself only with their *civil effects*; and meddles not with the conscience of the parties; who may be still bound by

* See the second Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. ii.

the

the religion of the contract, when all the civilities are dissolved. And this casuistry, it seems, has the authority of the bishops STILLINGFLEET and FLEETWOOD for its support. The former of these learned men expresses himself in this manner: "Marriage "being a contract of a civil and public nature, it "is very just and fitting that the Civil Society and "the Christian Church should appoint rules and "orders for the decent performance of it, and may "appoint penalties to the breakers of those rules; so "far as to illegitimate the Children born of such "marriages, which is *nulling* the contract as to the "*civil effect* of it. But I do not see how either "Church or State can null the CONTRACT AS TO "CONSCIENCE, SO AS TO MAKE IT LAWFUL FOR "SUCH PERSONS TO MARRY OTHERS*."

This determination, when applied to vindicate this act of civil power, seems to have a very extraordinary aspect; as fixing the imputation of injury, to Society and Religion, in the very attempt to throw it off.

It intangles the Parties irregularly contracting, between two Authorities. They are deprived by Law of all the civil benefits consequent on Marriage, and are at the same time bound by Conscience to hold the contract indissolvable.

If they follow Conscience, Society is like to suffer by throwing bars in the way of the marriage state: If they follow Convenience, under the shelter of Law, they violate the duties of Religion.

It is of moment, therefore, to examine a doctrine

* Miscell. Discourses, p. 73.

supported

supported by so reverend Authority, and which appears to be attended with such manifest absurdity.

I apprehend the conceit may have arisen from not distinguishing a real difference in the general nature of Contracts. One kind there is into which a Man *may lawfully enter*, without observing the conditions which the laws prescribe to contracts, it undertakes to support and vindicate. There is another, into which a man *may not lawfully enter*, without observing the conditions.

Of the first sort are those which concern the sale and alienation of real property. If such be transacted by a *verbal* form only, when the law requires a *written*, I apprehend no *civil effects will follow*; though the parties be obliged in justice and good faith to perform the terms of their agreement.

Of the second sort is that of *Marriage*. If this be entered into by any other form than what the Laws of Society prescribe, no obligation will follow, in Conscience. In the preceding Discourse I have attempted to shew, that Marriage is of this sort: that, without the sanction and concurrence of the Magistrate, neither divine nor human laws permit the parties to enter on the contract. The legal incapacity therefore occasions an original *nullity*, which a positive law only declares and supports. So that Conscience is, in this case, no further concerned than to oblige the Party *deluding* to make civil reparation for the accidental injuries accruing, by his profanation of the rite, to the Party *deluded*: But as to the Contract itself, this not receiving its essential quality of indissolubility till made on the terms

terms which civil laws prescribe, it was null and void from the beginning.

The authority of parents, the harmony of families, the peace of Society, all seem to require the dissolution of personal contracts of this kind illegally transacted. The wisest of all Lawgivers has fully declared himself to be of this opinion in a case purely and entirely religious, in the most awful of all contracts, Vows made to the Almighty: For, in conformity to the genius of the Mosaic Religion, God indulged his chosen People in frequent contracts or intercourse with him, by Vows. Now the Code of this Divine Lawgiver expressly decrees, that "if a woman vow a vow unto the Lord, and "bind herself by a bond, BEING IN HER FATHER'S "HOUSE IN HER YOUTH; and her Father hear her "vow, and her bond, wherewith she hath bound "her soul, and her Father shall hold his peace at "her; then all her vows shall stand, and every "bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall "stand. But if her Father DISALLOW her in the "day that he heareth: not any of her vows or "of her bonds, wherewith she hath bound her soul, "shall stand: and THE LORD SHALL FORGIVE "HER, BECAUSE HER FATHER DISALLOWED "HER*." He goes on, in the same manner, to give the like privileges to the *Husband*.

Here we see a bond, in its own nature the most irremissible, entered into according to the genius, and by the direction, of Religion: Yet if it be opposed, though but by human considerations, by

* Numbers xxx. 3. seqq.

those

those to whom the contracting party owes duty and obedience, and under whose care and protection she remains, it becomes void as if it had been never made. The Parent, or the Husband the natural Guardian, may confirm or annul it, just as he sees convenient: but it never became a real indissolvable bond, till, by their acquiescence, it had received its essential nature.

On the whole, it appears, that there are two kinds of contracts in use amongst men; one of which it is not so much as lawful to enter into without the magistrate's allowance; and of this kind is MARRIAGE, which therefore, so irregularly made, becomes null and void from the beginning. The other kind may be lawfully transacted, without following the Magistrate's prescribed rule; and therefore, this, indeed, will bind in conscience, though no civil effects arise from it.

A

# CHARGE

TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF GLOUCESTER;

1761.

A

# CHARGE,

&c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

IN the simplicity of the good old times, when the Clergy *first* met their Bishop, who might be then said, in every sense, to do the honours of the Assembly, He held it incumbent on him, to inform them by what means this relation had sprung up between them; that it was neither clerical ambition on his part, nor court intrigues on the part of his Patrons, which drew him from his beloved obscurity; but a mere sense of the Church's want of good Governors, that had induced the State to force out his reluctant merit into so eminent but hazardous a Station.

This was an ancient custom, and a good. The acquaintance between the Bishop and his Clergy could not commence more happily than in the information he gave them of the confessed importance of his character.

In

In course of time, this friendly confidence was found to have its inconvenience, which, by degrees, brought on the disuse; and this without much violence on the communicative disposition of the Diocesan: For now the Clergy were become little curious to know how, or from whence, their Bishop had dropt down amongst them; and he as little disposed to tell them a ridiculous or unedifying story. It was enough that they met; and that their meeting was to their mutual content.

This it could not fail to be, as it was devised for these two good purposes:

First, That the Bishop might from time to time remind his Clergy, thus assembled, of their obligations to the faithful discharge of the *pastoral care.*

And secondly, That he might receive, in return, their best advices for the good government of his Diocese.

But this latter purpose, whether through the modesty of the Clergy, or the sufficiency of their Diocesan, is now forgotten. A neglect much to be lamented, as the two duties have a close connexion with one another: yea necessary to support and maintain that harmony which should always subsist between the Bishop and his Clergy, while every return of this triennial meeting becomes a mutual interchange of good offices.

Believe me then, my Reverend Brethren, that I shall always esteem your counsel and advice as the most valuable mark of your affection and attachment to me.

But

But inveterate custom hath so long prevailed, that these Meetings are now entirely taken up with the first part only of their destined purpose—the Diocesan's exhortation to the faithful discharge of the *pastoral care*. And though sometimes his discourse may have deviated, and not a little, from the occasion, yet the title, common to them all, still keeps up the remembrance of the thing: the name, CHARGE, implying that they had once a common subject, and that subject the PASTORAL CARE. For the name is not taken from the decisive harangues bearing the same title, in civil Judicatories, where the presiding Magistrate explains the Law to an uninstructed audience, or inforces it to the inferior Ministers of Justice. Nor yet from a command or *Charge* which a Lord and Master imposeth on his Servants; but from that tender and pathetic exhortation of St. PAUL in his *pastoral letter* to the Thessalonians——" You know (says he) how we " exhorted and comforted, and CHARGED every " one of you, *as a father doth his children*, that you " walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his " kingdom and glory *." Thus are names sometimes of use to call back deviating or depraved Institutions to their original rectitude.

A CHARGE from this place, therefore, which did not first and principally exhort to the faithful performance of this capital duty, would want much of its essential integrity.—Literary acquirements, a zeal for the present government, personal morals, and

* 1 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

soundness in the orthodox faith, may have their turns on this occasion; but as *means* only to this capital *end.*

Let me never forget, therefore, first of all to exhort you, with all the warmth and earnestness becoming your Pastor and Overseer, to pay a strict attention to this principal and characteristic duty.

But when I have done this, I reckon, I have done all that is necessary on so beaten a subject, and to so well-instructed an Audience. If any thing further be wanting, it will be only to caution you, in the discharge of it, against those two extremes of temper, *lukewarmness* and *fanatic zeal:* This accompanied with a morose severity of manners, which makes even the Gospel-morals unamiable; That, with dissipation and love of pleasure, which gives scandal to the sounder part of your Flock, and a bad example to the unsound.

The *pastoral care*, therefore, we will suppose to be ever in our view, and the pleasing object of all our labours. What the younger part of you may haply want, is only to be assisted in the best means to this end. You may occasionally need to have it explained to you—How your own *integrity of morals* best facilitates this *care*, by procuring you the esteem and reverence of your Flock—How the *extent of your knowledge* will enable you to throw a fence round your Fold, that shall bar all entrance to *fanaticism*, whether spiritual or literary; to *bigotry*, whether religious or civil; to *infidelity*, whether philosophical or immoral.—And lastly, How the *soundness of your faith* will secure you from labouring in vain. In a word,

word, you may need occasionally to be instructed, in what manner the great work of salvation may be accomplished to the best advantage: You will rarely need to be informed of the importance of the work itself.

Give me leave, then, to take up one of these topics for your present consideration.

And, as the best human security, I know, against the mischiefs just now enumerated, is, *superior abilities in the learning of your profession*, I shall choose to select this for the subject of my discourse.

And purposing, hereafter, to hazard my thoughts concerning *the best method of studying Theology**, I desire, that what I now say may be understood as addressed to you, the younger part of my Brethren: The elder being better qualified to give, however ready, in their modesty, they may be to receive, advice on this important subject. Indeed, to these reverend men I might well remit the care of instructing their younger Brethren, did I not consider that *advice* and *direction* may possibly come with somewhat more authority, as it certainly comes with more solemnity, from this place.

I would suppose, from the circumstances both of your private and public character, that there is no occasion to excite you to the pursuit of KNOWLEDGE; especially when, from the circumstances of the times likewise, both your private and public character so much need this ornament and defence.

* See concluding Article of following Volume.

Use and habit in your private character, one would hope, should naturally keep you attached to these pursuits: your education (to enable you to sustain with decency your public character) having formed your mind to abstract reflection; and given it the needful ply towards speculative meditation.

But unhappily, by too short a view of things, you have been apt to mistake the completion of your academic courses for the completion of your theologic studies: and then, by a false modesty, have despaired of knowing more than you would suffer those august places of your education to teach you.

Were it not for such mistakes as these, your habits, concurring with the leisure so bountifully bestowed upon your station, would have enabled the former impulse to keep you moving in that literary course; till fresh impulses from increasing knowledge had fixed you steadily in that orb which you are appointed to enlighten and adorn.

And this LEISURE, which is so peculiarly your own, is not, like the other means of knowledge, to be employed with indifference, or neglected with impunity. You may cast aside your books; you may withdraw yourselves from learned instruction; and still possess your ignorance undisturbed. But your *leisure*, like those *spirits* which magicians are said to raise, and know not how to set on work, will haunt and terrify you till you find it in employment; if not to the benefit of your neighbour, yet, like those wicked spirits, to his harm and mischief. For nothing is more dreadful to the imagination than TIME still attendant and unoccupied.

Lay-

Lay-gentlemen have many advantages of you in the disposition of their *leisure*; if they neglect to employ it usefully, they may yet waste it without much scandal. The decency, the dignity of your profession will not suffer you to be the companion of their usual sports and dissipations. Nay, could you in honour partake in their amusements, yet the slender provision for the support of your order will disable you from figuring amongst them in such a way as only a gentleman would choose.

Now here, the noblest, as well as cheapest amusement (if you should happen to mistake letters for nothing more) lies open to you. An amusement, which, unlike those other inglorious ways of eluding *the business of life*, neither clouds the mind, nor enervates the body: But gives strength to the corporeal, and adds vigour to the intellectual faculties; for application to letters leads us into the habits of temperance; and advances in philosophy help us to subdue the more disorderly passions. Hence the profession of learning is seen, above all others, to reward its followers with *length of days*; a vigorous old age being observed to be the more peculiar lot of reverenced letters.

Nor is it merely *long life* which a pursuit of learning procures: for *long life*, without honour, the generous mind would disdain to make its choice. No; WISDOM provides more amply for its votaries. *Happy* (says the illustrious King of Israel) *is he that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: length of days is in her hand, and in her right hand* RICHES AND HONOUR *. And,

* Prov. iii. 13 & 16.

in times like these, so eagerly aspiring to the prize of superior knowledge, who will dare to suspect that *riches and honour* are not the constant fruits of men's successful studies?

But be this as it may. A noble mind will pursue *wisdom*, let the reward of his attainment of it be never so uncertain; since a Churchman, who neglects to gain honour by letters, is sure to fall into contempt. If a lay-gentleman, of no learned profession, chooses to be illiterate, he lives without a species of reputation, which few esteem a defect in his character. If a lay-gentleman of a learned profession be found thus wanting, he is only neglected and forgotten: But let a Clergyman be once noted for his ignorance, and so strong is either the general malignity to his order, or the inforced sense men have of its inward dignity, that such a one is held up, through life, for the common object of contempt and derision.

These are the motives which should dispose you, as gentlemen, brought up in the study of letters, to persevere in the same pursuit, for the support and ornament of your character. But as men professing *sacred learning*, there are others still more forcible. The honour and reputation attending the acquirement of *wisdom* is now no longer a mere personal concern; it reflects honour and reputation on the Body to which you belong. Yet still, this is to be understood only of those studies which relate immediately to your ministry. For a Clergyman to follow other studies, is, in the attempt, disreputable, as it has the look of neglecting or deserting the interests of your own Body: It is, in the issue, fruitless, as

the stage to which men arrive in studies foreign to their profession is rarely considerable. Let a Churchman busy himself in law, and his ambition must terminate in a tolerable Justice of the Quorum. Let him amuse himself in the art of physic, and he never rises higher than a Village-doctor.

By this fantastic desertion of the studies of his calling, he transgresses likewise one of the plainest precepts of moral duty. Every member of a society lies under a tacit obligation to consult in the first place, the reputation, honour, and benefit of that society. But this duty can be discharged no otherwise by us, than in prosecuting such studies as may best serve to illustrate and support those principles of knowledge and wisdom on which the practice of the profession is established.

Yet further: Such an one not only stands indebted to his society, but likewise to himself. Every particular is, by the same rule of moral duty, obliged to examine carefully the grounds of his profession, to enable him to discharge that personal service to which he bound himself when he entered into it.

The lawyer, who employs his time in natural and mathematical enquiries, will be ill qualified to adjust the due degrees of moral evidence, on which the interest of his clients principally depends: And the physician who turns poet, since the use of *charms* hath been separated from the art of healing, will need (and must expect no other) a patient with as warm an imagination as his own.

Far higher interests than these are intrusted to our care: and therefore far greater attention is re-

quired in the support of them. So that no honest Churchman will be lightly drawn away by foreign studies, when seen for what they are. He may be accidentally deluded, when they wear the face of relation to his own. Thus Church-history making an important part of our theologic studies, the *Antiquarian*, who delights to solace himself in the benighted days of Monkish owl-light, sometimes passes for the *Divine*. But while he flies from the sublime knowledge of modern times, and yet never goes back far enough to seize the pure and simple truths of primitive Christianity, he soon betrays his adulterate species.

But what will be of more force than all, to hold you attached to the proper studies of your profession, is to keep in mind those sacred engagements which you so solemnly contracted with Heaven, when you first entered on your ministry, *to devote yourselves* entirely to the service of Religion. And surely you can never think that this service may be effectually discharged without the succours of such parts of *human wisdom* as are most fitted to enlarge the understanding, and to enrich the mind with the knowledge of the Divine Nature, and of its own.

There never was an age of the Church, when this learned apparatus was not necessary to the work of the ministry; for no age hath been exempt from the folly or impiety of perverse opinions. Some have had more need of this shining panoply than others; but none ever wanted it so much, and was, at the same time, so ill supplied as the present.

BIGOTRY, SUPERSTITION, and FANATICISM, have,

have, in every age, corrupted the integrity, stained the purity, and dishonoured the sobriety of the Gospel; so that there was always full employment for human wisdom and science to support the truth and dignity of our holy Religion. But in these miserable times, LEARNING ITSELF hath been made to apostatize, and to bear arms against its own interests. For dire *fanaticism*, hitherto content to pollute THEOLOGY, hath now taken a wider range, and ostentatiously attempted to draw over both PHILOSOPHY and CRITICISM (the specific remedies of her disorders) to her party. So that now we have not only, as of old, a fanatic theology amongst our field-preachers, but a fanatic species of philosophy excogitated by Mr. Law, and a fanatic species of criticism, under the control of Mr. Hutchinson.

Besides these enemies of our REASON, we have likewise upon our hands the common enemy of our HOPES; who, from every quarter, and under various names, makes bands apart to assault the Ordinances of Heaven; such as the *Freethinker*, who attacks Revelation obliquely, under the cover of scepticism; such as the *Deist*, who defies it openly with the blunted arms of overworn sophistry; and such as the *Naturalist*, who would involve all in one common ruin, by his blasphemies against the moral Government of God.

From what fatal concurrence of circumstances these principles came to infect the body of the common people (principles, till of late, confined to a few Particulars, perverted by a *bad philosophy*, and still

still further corrupted by *worse morals*), how this, I say, came about, it is not my purpose to explain to you in this place. I have already said enough upon it, on other occasions. It is sufficient that sad experience informs you of the fact.

Now though the *fashionable world* might support itself for a time, on Principles which, from their novelty and boldness, flatter its vanity, and keep it easy in its vices; yet the *common people* could never remain long without a religion of some sort or other. Hence arose new evils, and fresh employment for the Ministers of the Gospel.

A Religion (as we say) the People, however debauched or misled, must always have, though it be only to swear or to cheat by. A return to that rational and established system, which they had so wantonly cast aside, is never to be expected, after having abused the exercise of that reason which first brought them to embrace, and which (till that abuse) had kept them steadily attached to it. Their passions now governed, under the leading of *superstition* and *fanaticism:* and as each man's temperature disposed him to listen to the one or the other of these Seducers, there were emissaries at hand to take advantage of the prevailing infirmity.—Of their superstition, the indefatigable Agents of Rome secretly availed themselves: and the field-preachers openly set fire to their fanaticism.

Great cities, where only a true judgment of the general bent of a people can be made, are at present full of complaints of the vast numbers daily seduced to Popery and Methodism.

To

To make head, therefore, against this torrent of evils, the most improved abilities, and the most unwearied diligence, are but just sufficient. We have now, to deal with the sophisms of Infidelity, the authority of Papistry, and the jargon of Methodism. And though bad logic may ask much dexterity to unravel; and old prescription may require much erudition to expose its rotten grounds; yet spiritual gibberish is still better intrenched, and harder to be approached, for its having no weak side of common sense;

——*recalcitrat undique tutus.*

These motives, to minds like yours, will, I am sure, give redoubled vigour to your studies. I wish I could honestly encourage you by another; which only such minds deserve to have objected to them, and which baser natures think of more worth than all the rest; I mean, *the rewards attendant upon letters*. All States have indeed provided for them: But statesmen of all times have found it necessary to divert this sinking fund, more or less, from its proper designation, to their own temporary occasions. There is but one season in which merit in our profession bears a price in the public market; and that, no good man would wish to see return; I mean, one of those *state revolutions*, when, for the sake, or on pretence of LIBERTY civil and religious, both the Crown and the Constitution are put in hazard. Then, indeed, as in a time of common danger, the people grow serious; they fly to the altars, and take refuge under the wings of the ablest and most approved dispensers of the established

established faith; who now, become of civil use to prop a shaken throne, are brought forward even by ministers of state. At all other times, these rewards, although provided by every political Institution, are yet rarely dispensed in the *administration* of any of them.

Let us expect then nothing from Learning, but what learning itself is able to bestow: That serene pleasure which accompanies the progress, and that happiness which crowns the end, of our labours. For though, like all other, even the best of human pursuits, the first advances may be attended with anxiety and pain; yet, unlike all other, the delight which flows from increasing knowledge, through the *habit* of investigating TRUTH, is as pure and undisturbed as it is warm and rapturous. In all other rational pursuits, the pleasure arises from the end; the means being still accompanied with disgust: here it springs alike both from the end and means: and, as in the advancing work of Creation, where *good* accompanied every step of the progress, the *labour*, and the *rest from labour*, were equally *blessed*. All pleasure comes from, and results into, our intellectual feelings. Many species of it are conveyed through perverse, many through corrupted channels. But the irradiating influx of *sacred truth* comes directly from its source; and is received by the chaste and enlightened mind with holy raptures, as in its native sanctuary. In a word, the state of growing knowledge is, to the SAGE carried up in divine and moral speculations, no other than a state of happiness.

Such

Such are the powerful and alluring motives to proceed in the proper learning of your profession. But, without some advices to direct your course, the laying these exhortations before you would do me but little credit, and produce as slender benefit to yourselves.

I shall proceed therefore, as my leisure may enable me, and your attention give me encouragement, to hazard my further thoughts on this important subject. Much experience, and not a little reflection, may have rendered me not totally unqualified for this undertaking. And, proper DIRECTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY, is, in the present state of things, I will suppose, no less *necessary* than difficult.

The usual time you sojourn in the UNIVERSITIES is very laudably employed in the prosecution of such studies as are to fit you for your *Degrees*. Some of these are foreign to the learning of your profession; others but remotely relative to it. So that, what between the increasing expences of the *age*, rather than of the *place*, and the daily wants of a fresh supply for the Ministry, the greater part of you are turned out into the world before those incomparable Establishments have put the last hand to your education, and led you through the more sacred parts of the Temple of Wisdom.

It is true, you no sooner step into the world than you have your wants abundantly supplied. Instructors crowd in upon you from all quarters. And, just as on Man's entrance into life, in the famed table of Cebes, every false species of happiness presents itself before

before him, each striving who shall first get possession of the new comer; so, on your entry on the ministry, every phantom of false science, raised up at the resistless call of the Sages in St. Paul's Church-yard, open wide their hospitable arms, to receive you to their daily, their weekly, and their monthly lectures. What shining collections of polite literature! What weighty volumes of profound criticism, have crowned their generous labours! But in *Scriptural abundance*, their unsparing bounty chiefly displays itself: Commentaries, Histories, and even Dictionaries of the HOLY BIBLE, keep rolling down upon you, from the same perennial source. While the smaller Divinity, like *the flies and lice of Egypt from the dust of the land*, meets you in your dish, and lies hid in all you taste and handle. The artful disguise, too, is no less taking than the plenty. And, as Flaminius's Host of Chalcis entertained his Guest with a magnificent variety of viands, and all from the hog-stie, so the whole of this delicious cookery comes from as dirty a place, I mean, a Bookseller's Garret.

While you retain any tincture of that noble learning with which you were imbued, in those pure Fountains of Science, which you left too soon, you will be in no danger from the delusions of these miserable impostors, ἐκ αἰσθανομένων τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀμαθίας, as Origen elegantly expresses it, where he characterizes certain false Teachers of the same stamp. In this temper, you will be prepared for, and indeed worthy of, better instruction. Whether my mediocrity shall be able to impart it, must be left to time, and to

your

your use of it, to determine. Till then, you need not blush to recollect and bear in mind what you once learnt at School,

" Virtus est VITIUM FUGERE, et sapientia prima
" STULTITIA CARUISSE."——

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